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ABSTRACT

This project was launched to discover if the communications gap between technical information about educational issues and lay consumption of the data could be breached. One of these issues, the financing of public education, was selected, and an investigation was launched to ascertain how written communications about educational finance could be custom tailored to particular social groups and whether such tailoring would pay off in communication benefits. The experiment targeted in on four socioeconomic groups in Dayton, Ohio -- low income blacks, low income whites, upper income blacks, and upper income whites. Fifty individuals were selected from each group to read and react to a basic document entitled, "Paying for Our Schools." (See EA 005 106.) On the basis of reader reaction, the basic document was customized for each audience. (See EA 005 107-111.) Study results demonstrated that people are relatively responsive to communication efforts on the part of the educational profession and that they prefer communication styles reflective of those to which they are habituated. This document details the rationale that led to the survey, describes the survey procedures, and presents the results of the survey for each group analyzed. An extensive bibliography on school finance is included. A related document is ED 070 188. (EA)

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INFORMING THE PUBLIC ABOUT ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS FOR FINANCING THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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I. FOREWORD

It would seem -- all things considered -- that the citizen has an inalienable right to know something about the school system he supports. Since he not only pays the system's bills but also entrusts his children to its care, he ought, reasonably, to be aware of the goals to which the system aspires and the procedures through which they are accomplished. If this argument holds, several interesting questions follow. What, for example, happens if the citizen is not kept informed? The answer, perhaps, may best be reflected in the anti-education attitudes that now grow increasingly pervasive among the citizenry. It is not just that taxpayers continue, with inflationary fervor, to reject tax and bond issues. Nor is it merely the matter of a mounting suspicion that the schools -- because of their radical ways, their reluctance to preach traditional values, and their seeming inability to teach basic skills to some of the young -- may be doing the society in. The negative side-effect of greatest consequence is that parents -- uninformed of the school's real purpose -- are unable to reinforce the lessons of the classroom in the home. As a result, more and more of the youth are victimized by a double message: the

teachings of home and school conflict, forcing the child, as best he can, to make his own sense out of the confusion of exhortation emanating from the adult generation.

A decade or two ago, when the pace of social change was a good deal slower, the problem was far less acute. In recent years, however, the mood and life-style of the nation have altered dramatically as technological advances, rapid economic growth, minority liberation and other social mutations have taken place. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the schools of today are far different -- and thus far more difficult to believe -- than those experienced by the current crop of parents.

Even constructive social change carries its own kind of transitional agony so that a social change-over is, at best, an anxiety-provoking situation. Today's parents, caught in a circumstance where everything past seems like the "good old days" and everything ahead seems risky and uncertain, finds it difficult to comprehend either the need or the

desirability of new math, peer tutoring, mini-courses, and a host of other innovations that shatter the security of tradition. Hence, the typical citizen can only look upon the schools as suspect.

The schools are now -- as always -- the servants of the people. They bear, consequently, a clear obligation to keep their clients informed. It suffices to say in this regard that raw propaganda, camouflaged in the artifacts of public relations, simply will not do. If the schools are to reaffirm their credibility with the public at large, they will need to work much more seriously at acquainting their clients with the strengths and weaknesses of the educational system, its successes and failures, its methods, its aspirations -- and above all -- its efforts to reform itself so that it will fit more closely with the changing times.

If the public must be informed about its schools, another interesting -- and self-evident question is: How does such communication best take place? If the efforts of the past have been inadequate, what were the greatest points of error? More importantly, what needs to be done now to correct matters? Communication is a diverse

and complicated art. It involves, at minimum, fundamental decisions regarding what ideas are worth communicating and what audiences must be reached. Once these conclusions have been reached, it then becomes necessary to resolve a number of secondary issues: To what communication channel is a particular audience most responsive? Must a particular idea be communicated to different audiences in different ways? And, importantly, does the manner of communication itself matter? Do people, for example, place more faith in an idea communicated by newspapers or television? Are Republicans skeptical about anything said by a Democrat, or the reverse? Is a church minister regarded as a more reliable source of information than a school superintendent?

It was the desire to obtain at least partial answers to these and similar questions that led to the project herein described. We wanted, in short, to try an experiment that might illuminate some of the darkness surrounding the problem of educating the public about education.

In the spirit of NCEC's programs of targeted

communications, we also thought it essential that the experiment produce a tangible product with a functional utility. Although it often has been observed that nothing is so practical as useful theory, we were of the opinion that whenever it is possible for a research project to develop a utilitarian tool -- without detracting from the rigor of the research exercise itself -- there is nothing to be said against the effort to serve several ends with the same device.

Accordingly, we began our endeavors by searching for a current issue in education -- one of widespread interest and significance -- that might serve as a communication topic. In due course, through repeated deliberations, we settled upon the problem of school finance.

It has become clear, in recent months, that there is a serious question as to the constitutionality of the procedures used by most states to finance public education. Put bluntly, the present funding methods may favor wealthy school districts to the disadvantage of poor ones. The topic's appeal was enlarged, moreover, by the fact that considerable controversy surrounds the proposed solutions to the

problem. Whereas some experts favor state aid, others are convinced that the answer lies in increased federal funding. Beyond all this, our search of media products indicated that there was a remarkable dearth of information on the topic. As occasionally happens, a problem on which scholars have labored for a sustained period of time suddenly catches the public's fancy. But before non-technical reports for lay consumption have been produced, a conspicuous communication void then materializes.

Thus, a project entitled Informing the Public About Alternative Options for Financing and Public Schools was born. The venture had three primary objectives: one, to examine the existing research on school finance and to synthesize its major conclusions into an easily-understood document that would be comprehensible to the average citizen; two, to test the communication effectiveness of this document with various segments of the educational public; and three, to determine whether the dissemination methods used to bring the document to the public's attention had any impact on public interest and attention.

Put another way, we wanted to create an informa-

tive document and determine whether there would be any profit in tailoring it to specific cultural groups. We knew that whereas some sub-cultures depend primarily upon print as a source of information, others lean more heavily upon other media. Similarly we knew, from previous experience, that the attractiveness of a communication grows when the subject matter has obvious relevance. We therefore wished to learn whether a crucial educational problem such as school finance could be related to the special interests of differing groups of people. Since current communication theory holds that the significance of a message is reinforced through repeated exposure, we wanted to find out whether this principle was equally applicable to objective information on the problems of schooling. Most of all, however, we were anxious to experiment with a new form of the conventional targeted communications package. In the past, virtually all targeted communication programs have been directed toward particular groups within the educational fraternity: supervisors, principals, teachers, and so on. Little, if anything, has been done with respect to communicating with the general public. Despite the great need for such communication, not much was known about the most efficacious way of going about the task. Viewed in the large, therefore, the experiment clearly seemed worthwhile.

II. THE TASK

Set forth sequentially, the tasks embodied in the project were as follows:

1. Preparing a basic document that synthesized the best of the available research on the dollar support of public education.

2. Testing the communications effectiveness of this document with four contrasting citizens' groups.

3. Evaluating the resulting evidence, and interpreting its significance in accordance with contemporary mass communications theory.

4. Developing a set of specifications that would outline the stylistic changes necessary for an effective targeting of the basic statement for each group.

5. Preparing four revised statements, each tailored to the communications preferences of a particular sub-culture within the general public.
6. Evaluating the effectiveness of each of the secondary statements in a new test situation.
7. Comparing various dissemination strategies used in disseminating the secondary statements.

It would be useful, perhaps, to expand briefly on the procedures involved in each of these seven sequential steps.

A. Preparation of the Basic Document

The initial trick, obviously was to perform a careful analysis of the technical literature on school finance, to isolate the major considerations surrounding the issue, and to translate the resulting conclusions into a popularized statement. It was essential, in this regard, to ensure first that the statement was well-written, and second, to take special pains in assuring its complete objectivity. To accomplish these ends we constituted a team consisting of a

research scholar from the Stanford Graduate School of Education, two professional newspaper writers, and a research assistant. Once we had identified the literature to be analyzed, the research scholar and one of the professional writers worked in tandem to produce a preliminary draft. The writer concerned himself with rhetoric and style and the research scholar concentrated on the material's authenticity. The preliminary draft, resulting from this effort, was then critiqued by a number of external judges, selected from both professional and lay groups. The draft was then revised by a second newspaper writer, who incorporated most of the suggestions derived from the critiques. Through these activities we achieved what we regard as a relatively comprehensive, clear, and objective statement of the issues underlying the literature on public school finance. All in all, 110 bibliographical references were examined. These are listed below:

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B. Testing the Document's Communications Effectiveness

Once the basic document was in hand, the next step was to determine how different social groups would respond to it, and thus to assess its communications effectiveness. In searching for a test site, and for contrasting socio-economic groups, we were fortunate to have established -- through an earlier Coalition project -- a work base in Dayton, Ohio.

Dayton was ideally suited to our purpose. In the Coalition's earlier endeavor, we had identified four discrete sub-cultures within the public served by the Dayton School District. One consisted of a large black community with its own special educational values and aspirations; one was a lower middle class white community, politically conservative and strongly opposed to the present school system; one was an affluent middle class group, generally satisfied with the present condition of schools; and the fourth consisted of another middle class group, one favoring extreme educational change and an increased emphasis on what has come to be known as humanistic education.

At the point of our testing, moreover, Dayton clearly was a city in financial crisis. The taxpayers had repeatedly rejected bond issues, the school district was on the verge of bankruptcy, the schools had temporarily

been closed in recent weeks, and citizen interest in school finance was therefore exceptionally high.

We began by establishing a cooperative working arrangement with Dayton's Joint Office of Citizen Complaints. One of the few cities in the country to use the services of a public ombudsman, Dayton already had initiated an impressive mechanism for encouraging community involvement in public issues. We were able, consequently, to employ members of the ombudsman staff for both the dissemination of our basic document and its subsequent evaluation.

The basic document, which we called Paying for Our Schools, was sent to fifty individuals in each of the four community groups. To add a socio-economic dimension to our survey, we cut across the four sub-cultures, selecting respondents on the basis of race and income. We allowed two weeks for the reading. A format was then developed that would yield a quick, easy, uniform and relatively accurate reporting of the criticisms we wished to acquire. The criticism questionnaire contained a number of statements about the basic document that were rated on a four-point scale, ranging from Agree Strongly to Disagree Strongly. No neutral point was included.

To further sharpen the discrimination among the four populations, we categorized the responses according to four specific characteristics. These included (1) a low-income black group ($5,000 a year or below); (2) a black middle-income group (between $10,000 and $15,000); (3) a low-income white group ($5,000 per year or below); and (4) a white middle-income group ($10,000 to $15,000).

We would have preferred, were budget considerations not involved, to have conducted our evaluative interviews on a person-to-person basis. In the present economy, however, doorstep interviews cost roughly $20 each. Because this figure was prohibitive, we settled for telephone responses.

In administering the survey, we selected--and trained--a status leader from each of the groups. This status leader (an individual regarded by the group as a nominal leader) first contacted each individual in the group urging that the document be read. After the time allotted for reading had elapsed, the status leader again contacted each individual by phone and solicited his criticisms. Our training of these interviewers was, admittedly, somewhat cursory. From

a technical point of view, it would have been better to have used a trained and experienced surveyor. However, because the reading was, in a sense, a kind of imposition, and because we were particularly interested in acquiring a true and honest response, we thought it wise to work with available status leaders and to offset the danger of "dirty data" by structuring the questionnaire in relatively tight terms.

Since we knew, from our previous communications efforts, that reader attention increases when the reading is associated with a subsequent task, the cover letter accompanying the delivery of the material made it clear that each respondent would later be asked for criticisms of the document. Readers were not asked to judge the information in the statement but rather the manner in which the information was presented. They were given to understand, in brief, that our desire was to make the material more understandable, more readable, and more interesting. Thus we tried, in our preliminary organization, to maximize the amount of criticism we would elicit, inasmuch as our goal was to acquire every possible clue to the document's revision.

Though less than ideal with respect to randomization and distribution, the sampling technique assured the

Coalition of a questionnaire response from each respondent. As anticipated, we found that the use of status leaders substantially increased the respondent's willingness to read the basic document. Moreover, the use of secondary telephone contacts, both to encourage reading and to obtain responses, provided a useful personal interaction between interviewer and interviewee -- without necessitating customary expenditures in money, time, and the inconvenience of door-to-door interviewing. We later concluded, in this regard, that the inclusion of the questionnaire with the shipment of the basic document was fortuitous: the readers knew in advance what questions they later would answer, and they therefore gave relatively greater attention to the effort than might ordinarily have been the case.

On the pages that follow, the data resulting from the survey is presented. Percentages are cited, for each of the four groups, on the 28 items in the quetionnaire. In addition, the suggestions for revision, synthesized from the unstructured comments by respondents in each group, are also presented.

1. Group I - Low-Income Blacks

a. Group Description

Group I consisted of fifty black citizens, each earning $5,000 per year or less. Forty-eight of the fifty individuals selected eventually responded to the questionnaire. Of this number, 52% indicated that they had read the document from "cover to cover". Among the 48% that did not complete the reading, only 17% said they had devoted more than 30 minutes to the document.

The following questionnaire tabulations indicate the specific response percentages of the low-income blacks. The column nomenclature refers to the percentage of readers answering each specific statement. When the term "majority" is used, the figures apply only to the number responding to the item, not to the total sample. The tabulations also show the group percentages of non-response to each item. These are organized to indicate whether or not the respondent read the booklet. Thus, the column headed, "Yes, but No Response" indicates the percentage of respondents who read the entire booklet, but who did not answer the questionnaire item. Similarly, the column, "Not Read, No Response", indicates that the respondent neither finished the booklet, nor answered the item. Tabulations for Group II, III, and IV -- using a smilar organizational scheme -- appear later in this section.

N = 48

PERCENTAGES FOR GROUP I

Criticisms of "PAYING FOR OUR SCHOOLS"

Percent

1. Did you read the booklet from "cover to cover"? Yes 52% No 48%

2. Approximately how much time did you spend reading the booklet?

Percent of "Incomplete" readers		Percent of "Complete" readers	
22	Less than 15 minutes	4	Less than 15 minutes
9	15 - 30 minutes	12	15 - 30 minutes
4	30 - 60 minutes	44	30 - 60 minutes
4	More than 60 minutes	28	More than 60 minutes
61	No response	12	No response

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Read, but No Response*	Not Read, No Response**
	Percent					
3. If this booklet had been at a magazine stand, its outside cover would have caught my eye.	2	6	2	40	4	46
4. The absence of a table of contents and page numbers made the booklet more difficult to follow.	2	15	2	31	4	46
5. The language was too complicated.	2	25	0	23	6	44
6. Graphs and illustrations would make the booklet more readable.	2	33	0	15	4	46
7. After reading this booklet once, I feel a group discussion is needed to make its message clear.	6	31	0	11	4	48

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Read, but No Response*	Not Read, No Response*
8. The four alternative plans for financing are confusing because not enough information was given about each of them.	2	29	4	13	4	48
9. The "paragraph-after-paragraph" style of the booklet was monotonous.	2	19	2	25	4	48
10. The booklet was too long.	0	13	2	33	4	48
11. The booklet stimulated my interest in educational financing, and I would like to read more on this topic.	6	17	4	19	6	48
12. The information contained in the booklet should have been divided into two booklets -- one containing background information, and the other the alternative plans.	6	15	2	23	6	48
13. The booklet gave too much space to the court cases.	0	21	0	25	6	48
14. Some terms used in the booklet were not explained clearly enough.	2	31	0	11	8	48
15. The booklet takes for granted that the reader already knows a great deal about paying for schools.	15	21	0	10	6	48
16. After reading the booklet, I am more confused about educational financing than I was before.	4	21	4	17	6	48
17. If another booklet like this one were published on another topic dealing with education, I would read it.	2	19	6	19	6	48

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Read, but No Response*	Not Read, No Response**
18. The information in the booklet was too detailed to hold my attention.	0	6	4	36	6	48
19. I would recommend this booklet to my friends and relatives.	2	13	6	25	6	48
20. The information in the booklet should have been divided into chapters.	0	21	0	25	6	48
21. Too many unimportant and unnecessary facts were included in the booklet.	8	17	2	19	6	48
22. The booklet did not contain enough information to present a clear picture of educational financing.	6	23	0	17	6	48
23. Cartoons illustrating some of the points in the booklet would make it more interesting.	8	23	0	15	6	48
24. The booklet was too opinionated to present a clear picture of the four alternatives.	6	17	6	17	6	48
25. The information in the booklet would have been more believable to me if it had been presented in the newspaper.	0	6	15	25	6	48
26. A "question-and-answer" format would have held my attention more than the style used in the booklet.	6	21	0	17	8	48

27. The information would have been more interesting to me if it had been presented:

	Percent	
On a television show	Yes 38%	No 62%
On a radio talk show	22%	78%
In a lecture followed by a question and answer period	42%	58%
In a group discussion	46%	54%

28. Other comments: (For example, if you did not read all of the booklet, please say why)

(See next page)

*"Read, but No Response" means that the respondent read the document from "cover to cover" but did not answer the question.

**"Not Read, No Response" means that the respondent did not read the document from "cover to cover" and did not answer the question.

GROUP I

Other Comments

A. Respondents who read booklet from cover to cover:

1. Booklet had some confusing sections--should have been more of a group discussion (after reading) with someone knowledgeable about it.

2. Main concern that too much authority taken by the teachers.

3. Language or dialogue should be down to earth for poor people. Should have been more Dayton rather than the examples of schools in other states. This lady lives in Edgewood Courts and did not appreciate the racial breakdown-- blacks vs. whites-- because those people are fighting a battle about equal racial breakdown in their housing.

4. Full coalition should have been explained at beginning of book. She feels the booklet was entirely too complicated for poor people and feels that more poor people would participate in the schools if someone would take the time to explain things to them.

5. Very confusing booklet, did not like at all.

6. Didn't understand the booklet -- very confusing.

7. Yes, I read the book. In Ohio we're more interested in our own affairs, not those of other states. Dayton doesn't stand on its own two feet. The kids in school are not going to get an education unless they want. We have underprivileged children where I work and some are good, but most just want the money - $40.00 for U.P. children to be spent on transistors is foolish. I was poor too, but w didn't waste our money. These kids also get paid to go to summer school. What a shame and waste. If they went to school to learn instead of playing on the playgrounds half the day, there wouldn't be so much need for summer school. Lots of these underprivileged children are living better than middle class. Everything is given to them on a silver platter. Cut out the monkey business and get down to brass tacks.

8. Did not like the book.

9. Did not understand booklet -- too confusing.

10. She feels that the booklet was too complicated -- says that she feels that the booklet should only deal with Dayton schools.

11. Really did not like the way it was written (cases).

B. Respondents who did not read booklet from cover to cover:

1. Does not have time.

2. Did not have time -- she now has two jobs.

3. Had sickness in family -- she does not have time to read.

4. Booklet very confusing and hard to understand -- needs to be illustrated more.

5. Elderly lady fractured her arm, had to go to hospital, so has not been able to read.

6. Has been sick so she does not have time to read.

7. Does not have time to read.

8. Did not have time to read. Booklet was too complicated.

9. Did not have time to read booklet.

10. She said she changed her mind and did not want to read it anyway. Says she doesn't have time.

11. She said she could not see the print -- booklet should have larger print.

12. Did not have time to read booklet.

13. She said she just couldn't understand the language in the booklet.

14. She said she would like something like this on television but does not have time to read this booklet.

15. Goes to work and goes to school -- does not have time to read booklet.

16. She said the kids threw the booklet away before she had a chance to read it and that she had changed her mind and didn't want to read it anyway.

17. Did not have time to read the booklet because of her work schedule. She thinks that if this information could be presented on the radio or television she would take the time to watch or listen to it.

18. Interesting to a point -- not written for laymen - should have been written for the local area at least Ohio. Print very small -- she likes to read but print should be larger. She said some of her friends and relatives read her copy and also felt it was too confusing.

19. Works at night and has also been ill. Just has not had enough time to read it. Would watch on television or listen to radio program.

20. Has not had time to read it.

21. Didn't finish because she's been sick (under doctor's care).

22. Son was ill so she did not have time to read the book.

b. Criticism of Format

Neither the language nor the format of the document drew strong negative comments from the low-income black group. Inferentially, of course, we assumed that because a substantial number of the respondents did not complete the reading, either the format, the content, the language, or all three were less than optimum.

Among the majority that did finish the reading, there was little indication that the absence of a table of contents or an index made the text difficult to follow, or that the paragraph on paragraph style of presentation was unduly monotonous. In general, the results verified several old communications principles. To wit, it is difficult to compel people to read material which they find boring or unrewardingly arduous. Nonetheless, it seems plain that interest and difficulty are two sides of a coin. A man dismayed by impending baldness may laboriously wade through a difficult medical treatise. Conversely, one disinterested in athletic events may disregard even the best-written material on the sports page of a newspaper.

The readers were about equally divided as to whether or not the information should have been organized into shorter

sections. Many were convinced that the presence of graphs and illustrations would have made the document more readable and that the inclusion of illustrative cartoons would have made the material somewhat more interesting. Most respondents said the subject topic would not have caught their eye at a bookstand.

Although the majority did not regard the document as excessively long, a substantial minority thought that the information should have been separated into two sections -- one containing the background information, and the other the alternative plans. Most respondents also thought that a question-and-answer treatment might have held their attention more effectively than the narrative style used. With respect to the complexity of language, readers' opinions were about equally divided: some regarded the material as essentially comprehensible, and some believed that the technical terms should have been explained more carefully.

In what is perhaps the most significant conclusion to be drawn from these results, it is apparent that generalizing about either reading tastes or reading preferences of people on the basis of their race or income level is an exceedingly questionable practice. In the Dayton sampling, at least, there is a considerable range in both

reading comprehension and reading interest among people with similar income and racial background. We cannot assume, consequently, that the poor are either dull or disinterested in social issues.

c. Content Criticism

With respect to the subject matter itself, most readers from the low-income black group did not consider the information too detailed to hold their attention. In point of fact, the majority felt that the document did not contain enough information to provide a clear picture of the school finance problem. A number of respondents, for example, thought the document made an unwarranted assumption to the effect that the readers would already know a good deal about education's dollar crisis. In particular, they felt that a lack of informational detail made the presentation on alternative plans for financing education somewhat confusing.

About half the group thought the document devoted too much time to court cases. Roughly the same percentage felt that too many unimportant and unnecessary facts were included. These findings would seem to illuminate one more clue regarding message construction: the reader's interest in detail varies according to his focal point of interest. Thus, readers interested in reducing their

taxes seek one sort of factual evidence. Those interested in improving the quality of education look for other kinds of informational detail.

In what we regarded as the most astonishing response of all, the readers were about equally divided in their belief that the document was too opinionated. In their preparation of the statement, the Coalition's writers devoted an enormous amount of effort toward achieving a fair, impartial, and unbiased representation of the facts. Moreover, experts in the field verified the report's objectivity before the survey was initiated. We were forced to conclude, therefore, that people unaccustomed to a comparison of alternatives tend to infect messages with their own illusions of prejudice. That is, even when a series of arguments are basically impartial, readers with a strong set of beliefs about a problem are likely to think that the message gives too much support to the enemy's position.

The scars of the poverty they endure are deeply etched in the psychic attics of the poor. What for them is most relevant, in any discussion of schooling, is the kind of education that will permit their children to escape the parents' plight. Compared to this concern, all other aspects of school finance are of minor importance.

d. Reader Effect

We had reason to assume, in our preliminary conjectures, that after reading the document, every reader would have a clearer understanding of school finance. We found, however, that some of the readers were more confused after their reading than before. Our initial reaction to this unsuspected turn of events was a mixture of chagrin and embarrassment. After exploring the secondary implications, however, we concluded that such a result was inevitable. When people without previous appropriate background are introduced to a complex and somewhat technical problem, their first exposure is likely to breed some confusion. For example, we often assume that we understand a particular social phenomenon. However, if we are forced to examine the phenomenon closely, we may find that our earlier ideas were based on a number of misconceptions and misperceptions. Unavoidably, then, our going back to the beginning to correct faulty notions is a discomforting and confusing exercise. But unless our interest outlives this temporary period of confusion, a clearer understanding cannot be reached.

Roughly 50% of the respondents indicated that their interest in the dollar problems of the schools had been stimulated by the document and that they would like to read more on the topic. It is important, however, that almost half of the readers said they would not be interested in

a similar document on a different educational topic and that they would be unwilling to recommend the present one to their friends and relatives. Consequently, we were once again compelled to acknowledge the old dictum which holds that when the message does not pique the receiver's interest, some additional stimulus must be added. All of this is to reinforce, in effect, what every advertising executive already knows intuitively: controversy, humor, and entertainment are invaluable devices for sugar-coating an otherwise unappealing pill. Since it is likely that the true importance of education is not widely understood by the public and that it suffers, therefore, from scant public attention, it seems fair to conclude that much must be done to enhance the relevance and appeal of education communications.

e. Alternative Preferences

When asked to indicate ways in which the information might have been more interestingly presented, a slight majority of the respondents suggested a kind of town-hall meeting. The interviewers were also of the belief that other modes of presentation -- a lecture followed by questions and answers, a television show, or a radio-talk show -- would not greatly increase the interest of the material. However, most readers also felt that a group

discussion was needed to make the document's message more clear. And of special interest, in view of the reliance people place on the press, most did not feel the arguments would have been more believable if they had appeared in a newspaper.

f. Suggested Document Revisions

From the foregoing, it was possible to approximate the kinds of modifications necessary to tailor the message to its target audience. To begin with, the basic statement apparently presumed more knowledge about school financing than was actually the case. Although about half of the respondents were sufficiently interested in the subject to read the booklet completely, many felt that the presentation was confusing and the terminology unnecessarily complicated. Thus, a more incisive format, greater simplicity of style, the use of questions and answers, and the introduction of graphs and, possibly, cartoons were indicated.

Much of the information was new to the readers but they clearly sensed that it could be utilized in the ongoing Dayton community debate regarding school financing. Basically, this supports the research evidence (Brock, Albert, and Becker, 1970) that people tend to prefer information which is both unfamiliar and useful. It

also supports studies (Zellner, 1970) showing that susceptibility to social influence is mediated by the complexity of the message and the person's self-concept. If, in short, we can assume that low self-esteem and low socioeconomic level are somewhat correlated, we must then reduce the cognitive complexity of any document aimed at low-income groups. This reduced complexity would make the message easier to comprehend. In turn, a more easily understood message should enhance self-esteem, thus increasing the reader's willingness to be influenced by the message.

In our subsequent revision of the basic document, wherein we sought to customize the material according to the preferences of the black, low-income audience, we began by shortening the length and sharpening the language. We then made a concerted effort to use examples that were simpler and more germane to the concerns of the audience. In keeping with our survey clues, the format has been altered, the print enlarged, and the paragraph-on-paragraph style interrupted with periodic questions. And, since the secondary tests of "fit" were to take place in Chicago and New York, we tried to add information of greater relevance to residents of these areas.

We were left, nonetheless, with two powerful obstacles: one, low-income black citizens, in the main, do not favor print as their preferred communications medium; and two, the subject of school finance does not have strong appeal for them. To cope with the first of these difficulties, we tried in the rewrite to insert several story-line episodes that may enhance the entertainment and human interest elements of the material. To counteract the second problem, we attempted to dramatize the importance of the topic and to more clearly demonstrate its social significance.

2. Group II - Low-Income Whites

a. Group Description

Group II was comprised of fifty respondents earning $5,000 per year or below. Ten individuals failed to respond to the questionnaire. Five of these said that they did not receive the booklet (a somewhat unlikely possibility) and five declined to respond to the questions, saying they had not had time to read the booklet. Of the remaining forty respondents, 65% read the booklet from cover to cover, and 92% of these spent more than thirty minutes with the material. In short, those that did read the material took sufficient time to give it careful consideration. Surprisingly, howevever, 43% of those who did not complete the reading of the document also spent in excess of thirty minutes with it. The reasons given for non-completion clustered around two primary factors: either the material seemed boring or the respondents felt they were already familiar with its arguments.

The problem of target audience disinterest has already been mentioned. All communications, of course, vie for the attention of the receiver. If, for example, a particular individual finds the topic of school finance unappealing, the sender's only option is to try and seduce attention through indirect motivation. The problem of misperceived knowledge-ableness, on the other hand, is somewhat easier to deal with.

Through the use of provocative questions sprinkled throughout the text, the use of a self-administered quiz, or similar devices, it is possible to shatter the receiver's complacency and, correspondingly, to pique his interest. Indeed, the classic bane of the communicator who works in the area of social awareness is the person who "already knows" everything about lung cancer, heart disease, communism, and drugs. Opening the closed mind, alas, is not easily done.

The data on Group II is summarized in the charts that follow:

N = 40

PERCENTAGES FOR GROUP II

Criticisms of "PAYING FOR OUR SCHOOLS"

Percent

1. Did you read the booklet from "cover to cover"? Yes 65% No 35%

2. Approximately, how much time did you spend reading the booklet?

Percent of "Incomplete" readers		Percent of "Complete" readers
14%	Less than 15 minutes	4%
21%	15 - 30 minutes	4%
29%	30 - 60 minutes	61%
14%	More than 60 minutes	31%
22%	No response	

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Read, but No Response*	Not Read, No Response**
	Percent					
3. If this booklet had been at a magazine stand, its outside cover would have caught my eye.	3%	20%	5%	50%	2%	20%
4. The absence of a table of contents and page numbers made the booklet more difficult to follow.	5%	22%	3%	40%	8%	22%
5. The language was too complicated.	8%	32%	3%	37%	0%	20%
6. Graphs and illustrations would make the booklet more readable.	5%	37%	0%	25%	8%	25%
7. After reading this booklet once, I feel a group discussion is needed to make its message clear.	5%	37%	3%	18%	5%	32%

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Read, but No Response*	Not Read, No Response**
8. The four alternative plans for financing are confusing because not enough information was given about each of them.	10%	42%	5%	15%	[illegible]%	25%
9. The "paragraph after paragraph" style of the booklet was monotonous.	15%	22%	3%	30%	5%	25%
10. The booklet was too long.	13%	22%	0%	40%	3%	22%
11. The booklet stimulated my interest in educational financing, and I would like to read more on this topic.	8%	32%	3%	22%	5%	30%
12. The information contained in the booklet should have been divided into two booklets - one containing background information, and the other the alternative plans.	8%	20%	0%	35%	7%	30%
13. The booklet spent too much time on the court cases.	8%	25%	5%	32%	3%	27%
14. Some terms used in the booklet were not explained clearly enough.	8%	52%	0%	12%	3%	25%
15. The booklet takes for granted that the reader already knows a great deal about paying for schools.	10%	47%	0%	18%	3%	22%
16. After reading the booklet, I am more confused about educational financing than I was before.	15%	25%	3%	32%	3%	22%
17. If another booklet like this one were published on another topic dealing with education, I would read it.	10%	50%	5%	7%	3%	25%

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Read, but No Response*	Not Read, No Response**
18. The information in the booklet was too detailed to hold my attention.	10%	27%	0%	37%	3%	23%
19. I would recommend this booklet to my friends and relatives.	8%	30%	5%	25%	7%	25%
20. The information in the booklet should have been divided into chapters.	3%	30%	0%	35%	2%	30%
21. Too many unimportant and unnecessary facts were included in the booklet.	8%	27%	0%	30%	5%	30%
22. The booklet did not contain enough information to present a clear picture of educational financing.	12%	30%	0%	20%	8%	30%
23. Cartoons illustrating some of the points in the booklet would make it more interesting.	3%	28%	5%	32%	5%	27%
24. The booklet was too opinionated to present a clear picture of the four alternatives.	5%	18%	0%	37%	8%	32%
25. The information in the booklet would have been more believable to me if it had been presented in the newspaper.	0%	15%	5%	45%	8%	27%
26. A "question and answer" format would have held my attention more than the style used in the booklet.	5%	30%	0%	32%	5%	28%

27. The information would have been more interesting to me if it had been presented:

	Percent	
	Yes	No
On a television show	40%	15%
On a radio talk show	10%	20%
In a lecture followed by a question and answer period	23%	20%
In a group discussion	32%	23%

28. Other comments: (For example, if you did not read all of the booklet, please say why)

(See next page)

*"Read, but No Response" means that the respondent read the document from "cover to cover" but did not answer the question.

**"Not Read, No Response" means that the respondent did not read the booklet from "cover to cover" and did not answer the question.

Group II

Other Comments

A. Respondents who read booklet from cover to cover:

1. Educational value - very good - stress on accountability is needed.
2. Has educational value.
3. Read, understood - helped me understand school financing better.
4. Don't read well, so had someone read to me.
5. Read it all.
6. Would be good in a newspaper or TV in a series.
7. Pretty good.
8. This is great (a book one can refer to) - will pass it around to our family.
9. Too long - too complicated - not explained well in our language.
10. Doubt if I would have read all of it if I hadn't promised.
11. Intend to reread part
12. Reread parts; comparison charts would have been helpful.
13. Whatever plan, the low-income working people would have to pay the highest percentage of what we earn or have.

B. Respondents who did not read booklet from cover to cover:

1. Money will come from tax payers; will take interest in paying when it is explained why demands by militants are met; sounds like a broken record (booklet)
2. Couldn't make heads or tails out of it.
3. Read part - misplaced but not interested. Takes too much concentration.
4. Didn't quite finish it.

Respondents who did not read booklet from cover to cover:

5. Print too small.
6. Too involved for me. I don't pay taxes - senior citizen.
7. Didn't make check list out - don't know nothing about it.
8. Too complicated; don't pay taxes - on welfare.
9. A lot of nonsense.
10. Too deep for me at 77 years of age.
11. Too much for me.

b. Criticism of Format

Like Group I, the low-income whites indicated that the topic would not otherwise have attracted their attention. Although most did not object to the absence of structure, roughly 40% would have preferred a text divided into chapters or sections. A little more than half of the respondents found the format and narration somewhat monotonous.

In comparison with Group I, a smaller percentage found the length excessive. Moreover, the majority differed with Group I's conviction that the material should have been divided into sections, one giving the background information and the other alternative finance methods. Whereas Group I favored the use of cartoons, Group II seemed more interested in graphs and other visual illustrations. About half of the respondents viewed the language as unnecessarily complicated and about half thought it satisfactory. A substantial majority, however, were of the opinion that the technical terms were not explained adequately. Many of the general comments referred to the booklet as "too deep", "too involved", or "too complicated".

c. Content Criticism

The analysis of the responses made it abundantly clear

that the low-income whites wanted more information, more simply presented, and a better explanation of financing alternatives. As in the case of Group I, many respondents felt the text assumed too much in the way of reader sophistication. Interestingly enough, the low-income whites regarded the booklet as more objective than the respondents in Group I. Although a number of conjectures come readily to mind, we were unable, in any defensible way, to account for this contradiction in viewpoint.

Contrasting Groups I and II, although there were differences, they were overshadowed by the similarities. Individual variation among the respondents apparently was of greater significance than their racial or economic status. Our results, in sum, confirmed the widely-accepted theory to the effect that individuals govern their response to a communication through a "selective exposure" mechanism (Sebald, 1962). Put another way, people defend themselves against unwelcomed ideas by accepting and rejecting various aspects of a message according to their psychological predispositions. Thus, they are able, through selective perception, selective distortion, and selective exposure, to maintain their existing attitudes and beliefs. It follows, therefore, that a successful communication -- particularly one that seeks to be persuasive -- must begin by overcoming these defenses.

d. Reader Effect

In general, the reading of the booklet had a positive but somewhat confusing effect on the low-income whites. After reading the booklet, a majority of the respondents felt more confused about educational financing than before. This phenomenon, wherein an abrupt introduction to a complicated, new problem produces a temporary cognitive chaos, was noted earlier in the report.

On the constructive side, however, most readers also indicated that the material stimulated their interest in educational financing. In addition, a majority also said they would like to read more on the topic. Whereas the largest percentage of Group I respondents were unwilling to recommend the booklet to their friends and relatives, most readers in Group II said they would be pleased to encourage a wider reading.

Although we have no hard evidence on the matter, it seems reasonable to infer that low-income white citizens -- heavily concerned with upward mobility -- would be somewhat less inclined toward social altruism than middle class whites or blacks. It is also possible that whites, many of whom are convinced that economic discrimination manifests itself in poor schools for poverty youngsters,

found it a bit more difficult to judge the material in an impersonal and unbiased way.

e. Alternative Preferences

When asked to choose among a list of alternative communication modes that included television shows, radio programs, and live lectures, the low-income whites expressed a strong preference for the television medium. The next highest rating was assigned to live lectures in conjunction with group discussions. Radio was regarded as the least desirable mode. It should be noted, however, that 23% of those who completed the reading did not express a preference for any particular communication medium. When this percentage is coupled with the number of respondents who did not complete their reading, it becomes evident that a rather sizable portion of the group apparently had no real basis for registering an opinion. It would be unwise, therefore, to regard the data on this particular item as conclusive.

On the item, dealing with format, a slight majority of the respondents indicated that a question-and-answer scheme would have held their attention more than that used in the booklet. Virtually all of the readers were convinced that a group discussion (or some other clarifying

activity) would be required to make the document's message clear. And, only a small minority thought the information would have been more believable if it had appeared in the newspapers. This finding, of course, can be taken to mean that the document had good credibility or, that newspapers are not held in high esteem as an objective source of information.

When the unstructured comments of the low-income blacks were compared with those of the low-income whites, it was evident that the reaction of the white group was somewhat more positive. A number of the readers clearly were of the opinion that the ideas had considerable "educational value." Many, for example, said that they intended to reread parts of the material to improve their personal understanding. Taken as a whole, the criticisms of Group II made it plain that both the complexity of the topic and the nature of the rhetoric contributed to the material's lack of clarity.

f. Suggested Document Revisions

According to McGuire (1968) three crucial factors influencing the communication process are (1) the probability that a persuasive message is actually being communicated, (2) the probability that the receiver actually

will attend to the message, and (3) given adequate attention, the probability that the receiver will comprehend the ideas. In view of McGuire's warnings, it seemed obvious to us that much is needed to be done in the way of altering the document's language and information if Paying for Our Schools was to accomplish its purpose with low-income whites.

The revisions necessary paralleled, in many ways, those required for the low-income black population. The language had to be simplified, technical terms needed to be explained more clearly, fewer assumptions ought to be made regarding the reader's understanding of the topic, and -- as always -- the material needed greater relevance.

On the bright side of the ledger, however, the readers seemed quite interested in the problems of education and many said they would be happy to read another publication on a different educational issue.

Overall reaction also showed that there would need to be more information on the major alternatives for financing the schools, more graphs and illustrations, and a greater effort to relate the text to the educational concerns of low-income white citizens. Should a different

presentation medium be used, a television presentation would be the group's first preference; community meetings and discussion sessions ranked second; and lectures that included a question-and-answer period were listed third. Virtually no interest was expressed in the use of radio.

3. Group III - Middle-Income Blacks

a. Group Description

Group III consisted of black individuals making between $10,000 and $15,000 per year. Forty-eight of the fifty readers responded to the questionnaire. Of this number, 55% read the booklet from "cover to cover", and 86% took thirty minutes or more to do so. Among those who failed to complete the reading, all respondents spent less than thirty minutes with the booklet. Predictably, most of those who did not finish the reading also neglected to answer the item in the questionnaire relating to amount of reading time. As in the other groups, the reasons given for noncompletion ranged from the style of the text to lack of personal time to disinterest in the topic.

It also is of interest to observe that the mixed current public preoccupation with individual privacy was reflected in the questionnaire responses. To wit, some individuals who completed the reading left out certain questionnaire items, and some individuals who did not complete the reading answered everything. The percentage of response on specific items ran from a low of 48% to a high of 75%.

It might be said, parenthetically, that the level of cooperation we experienced in both the preliminary and secondary document evaluations far exceeded our most optimistic expectations. Our respondents in Dayton, Chicago, and New York displayed a remarkable willingness to give of their time and energy. We believe this spirit of helpfulness resulted, not from the intrinsic lure of the subject matter, but rather from the hope that the experiment might improve the quality of the educational communications that reach the public.

Compared to the responses of the other three groups, those of the middle-income blacks were striking: very few individuals chose the option of either strongly agreeing or strongly disagreeing with a particular statement. For example, with a single exception, no more than 4% of the group either strongly agreedor strongly disagreed with any item. The other three groups, in contrast, had as many as 21% of the respondents using the categories of strongly agree or strongly disagree.

Once again, we concluded that it was permissable to assume that if the nonreaders had completed the manuscript, their responses would have approximated those of the people reading the entire document. In point of fact, we were able to verify the validity of this

assumption by persuading a small group of noncompleters to fulfill their assignment and answer all questionnaire items. In sum, then, the responses seemed reasonably representative. The percentage tabulations were as follows:

N = 48

PERCENTAGES FOR GROUP III

Criticisms of "PAYING FOR OUR SCHOOLS"

Percent

1. Did you read the booklet from "cover to cover"? Yes 55% No 45%

2. Approximately, how much time did you spend reading the booklet?

Percent of "Incomplete" readers		Percent of "Complete" readers	
35%	Less than 15 minutes	3%	Less than 15 minutes
10%	15 - 30 minutes	11%	15 - 30 minutes
0%	30 - 60 minutes	79%	30 - 60 minutes
0%	More than 60 minutes	7%	More than 60 minutes
55%	No response		

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Read, but No Response*	Not Read, No Response**
	Percent					
3. If this booklet had been at a magazine stand, its outside cover would have caught my eye.	2%	6%	8%	59%	0%	25%
4. The absence of a table of contents and page numbers made the booklet more difficult to follow.	2%	11%	2%	54%	0%	31%
5. The language was too complicated.	0%	21%	0%	54%	0%	25%
6. Graphs and illustrations would make the booklet more readable.	0%	40%	0%	35%	0%	25%
7. After reading this booklet once, I feel a group discussion is needed to make its message clear.	4%	25%	0%	31%	4%	36%

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Read, but No Response*	Not Read, No Response**
8. The four alternative plans for financing are confusing because not enough information was given about each of them.	2%	17%	0%	35%	8%	38%
9. The "paragraph after paragraph" style of the booklet was monotonous.	2%	40%	2%	27%	2%	27%
10. The booklet was too long.	2%	2%	0%	71%	0%	25%
11. The booklet stimulated my interest in educational financing, and I would like to read more on this topic.	2%	19%	2%	50%	2%	25%
12. The information contained in the booklet should have been divided into two booklets - one containing background information, and the other the alternative plans.	0%	15%	0%	46%	4%	35%
13. The booklet spent too much time on the court cases.	0%	25%	0%	33%	2%	40%
14. Some terms used in the booklet were not explained clearly enough.	0%	33%	0%	36%	2%	29%
15. The booklet takes for granted that the reader already knows a great deal about paying for schools.	2%	44%	0%	23%	2%	29%
16. After reading the booklet, I am more confused about educational financing than I was before.	2%	27%	2%	36%	4%	29%
17. If another booklet like this one were published on another topic dealing with education, I would read it.	0%	29%	0%	27%	13%	31%

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Read, but No Response*	Not Read, No Response**
18. The information in the booklet was too detailed to hold my attention.	0%	25%	0%	44%	2%	29%
19. I would recommend this booklet to my friends and relatives.	0%	12%	0%	40%	15%	33%
20. The information in the booklet should have been divided into chapters.	0%	35%	0%	13%	12%	40%
21. Too many unimportant and unnecessary facts were included in the booklet.	0%	21%	0%	33%	6%	40%
22. The booklet did not contain enough information to present a clear picture of educational financing.	2%	44%	0%	15%	4%	35%
23. Cartoons illustrating some of the points in the booklet would make it more interesting.	0%	13%	0%	54%	4%	29%
24. The booklet was too opinionated to present a clear picture of the four alternatives.	0%	19%	0%	27%	15%	39%
25. The information in the booklet would have been more believable to me if it had been presented in the newspaper.	0%	8%	0%	46%	8%	38%
26. A "question and answer" format would have held my attention more than the style used in the booklet.	4%	36%	2%	21%	6%	31%

27. The information would have been more interesting to me if it had been presented:

		Percent		
On a television show	Yes	44%	No	10%
On a radio talk show		35%		17%
In a lecture followed by a question and answer period		29%		13%
In a group discussion		44%		4%

28. Other comments: (For example, if you did not read all of the booklet, please say why)

(See next page)

* "Read, but No Response" means that the respondent read the document from "cover to cover" but did not answer the question.

** "Not Read, No Response" means that the respondent did not read the document from "cover to cover" and did not answer the question.

GROUP III

Other Comments

A. Respondents who read booklet from cover to cover:

1. Kind of difficult to understand.
2. Didn't like it.
3. Write a book more to the point and about our area.
4. A little complicated to understand.

B. Respondents who did not read booklet from cover to cover:

1. Check through, but didn't read it.
2. Didn't take time to read.
3. Unable to read.
4. Didn't have time to read.
5. It wasn't being presented in an interesting fashion.
6. I feel if each person's income were taxed accordingly, we would not have to worry about how the schools would be financed.
7. Didn't have time.
8. Couldn't hold my attention; maybe if written in another form, I wouldn't have been so bored.
9. Didn't quite understand what it's all about.
10. It wasn't interesting.
11. Can't understand all this.
12. Uninteresting to start with.
13. Wasn't interesting.
14. Didn't care for it.

B. Respondents who did not read booklet from cover to cover:

15. Couldn't understand it.

16. Didn't fully understand.

17. Couldn't get interested.

18. Misplaced material.

19. Vacationing.

b. Criticism of Format

The black citizens from the middle-income group felt that -- were it not for the study -- the topic would not have captured their interest. They expressed reasonable satisfaction with the format but thought the material could better have been divided into separate chapters. To a far greater extent than either of the low-income groups, the respondents found the paragraph-after-paragraph style of the booklet monotonous and thought the publication suffered from a failure to use questions and answers as organizers. Probably reflecting the difference in their educational backgrounds, the middle-income black respondents were not bothered by the booklet's length or by the fact that background information and alternative financing plans were not treated in separate sections.

Although a majority of the respondents did not find the language unduly complicated, the evidence with respect to the use of technical terms was inconclusive: some readers thought additional explanatory material would be helpful and others did not. Interestingly enough, opinions as to the desirability of graphs and other visual representation also were divided. We

suspected, in reviewing the data, that a desire for graphic illustrations represented a kind of intellectual immaturity. Since virtually all magazines and newspapers that are directed at the general public make abundant use of pictures, charts, and other devices to provide a relief from column after column of print, we concluded that such an organization would be better.

c. Content Criticisms

The responses of the middle-income black group suggested that the four financing plans were described adequately. However, the results also demonstrated that a good deal more background information on the principles of school finance would be necessary. Many of the criticisms, expressed in the unstructured section of the questionnaire indicated that some individuals had difficulty grasping the overall implications of the booklet. In short, while they seemed to understand the essential differences between the four alternatives depicted, they did not understand the larger consequences that might accompany each. Significantly, neither of the two low-income groups expressed any concern for such secondary implications. In contrast

to the first two groups, the readers in Group III did not feel that the information was too detailed to sustain attention, or that there was an over abundance of supporting information, or that the court cases were treated with excessive narration. Presumably, therefore, middle-income respondents, because of greater educational background, have a somewhat larger appetite for detailed information on a topic.

With regard to the document's objectivity, the response was also mixed. Most of the group did not regard the booklet as unduly opinionated; nonetheless, we thought it significant that a relatively large minority disagreed with this conclusion. It may be, we later speculated, that the matter of objectivity is more uncertain than some of the other variables we examined. It should be pointed out, moreover, that this particular item drew the smallest amount of response: 46% of the readers failed to react.

d. Reader Effect

We were satisfied, after reviewing the data on Group III that the basic document made possible a substantially improved understanding of educational finance. Yet, although the readers found the material reasonably

interesting, most were not inclined to look further into the subject. But when asked if they would welcome another booklet on another topic, most responded affirmatively. This result indirectly verifies a a long-standing assumption among educational communicators: for most of the public, a little information goes a long way. The typical citizen does not want to know a great deal about a particular educational problem. He prefers to reach a somewhat global (if superficial) understanding of its major aspects. It is difficult to fault a person in this regard, for a vast number of social issues compete for attention. Among that limited segment of the general public that prefers to remain socially informed, the usual attitude holds that it is better to understand a little about a large number of issues than a great deal about one or two. Thus, those charged with disseminating information about education to the citizenry would be well-advised to focus on limited content, carefully selected according to an order of priority, and to cast their story in as lively and provocative a context as possible.

e. Alternative Preferences

The group differences attributable to education and

affluence also were apparent in the reactions to questionnaire items dealing with alternative modes of communication. For example, a majority of the middle-income blacks expressed a preference for group discussion, whereas the previous two groups favored television. Similarly, these respondents demonstrated less faith in the credibility of newspapers: only 4% felt the arguments would have been more believable in the popular press. There was comparatively little interest in radio and in public lectures.

With reference to possible modifications and additions, the majority of the group indicated that a question-and-answer format would not have been of much help. Although the use of follow-up discussion was viewed with favor, it was clear that the point of these discussions was not to clarify the document's meaning but to provide a vehicle for debate and speculation.

Communications scholars have long held that people's attitudes and opinions are heavily influenced by the groups to which they belong. The consistency of response obtained in Group III bore testimony to this fact. A similar effect, though less apparent, occurred in each of the other groups as well.

We discovered, through a serendipitous circumstance, one other intriguing phenomenon. During the period in which the questionnaire responses were being collected, an informal public meeting on the subject of school finance was held by a neighborhood church. A dozen or so of our respondents attended the meeting. About half of this number had already submitted their questionnaire reactions and those of the other half were collected during the week after the meeting. The church minister sought, during the discussions, to sway the participants toward a particular point of view. Early in the evening he obtained, by a show of hands, an initial indication of the audience's existing state of mind. To test his own persuasive efficacy, prior to the serving of refreshments at the conclusion of the discussions, he again asked for a show of hands. It then became evident that none of the respondents who had already submitted their questionnaire responses altered their point of view; but five of the six who had not yet completed their questionnaires, changed their convictions as a result of the minister's arguments. Seemingly, then, the public expression of a belief tends to imbed it somewhat more permanently in the individual's attitudinal system.

f. Suggested Document Revisions

The document (or the topic) was sufficiently attractive to sustain the interest of most readers. However, it did not elicit strong approval. The background information was a bit scant, and the ideas did not appear to have touched the readers' personal concerns as much as they might. We surmised, therefore, that in our rewrite it would be desirable to strive for greater congruence with matters of current interest to middle class black citizens.

We resolved, in addition, to examine the journalistic style of magazines slanted toward black readers and to explore various devices through which the material might be made more pertinent. It seemed obvious, as well, that more supporting information was needed and that the secondary implications of the financial problems of schools should be described more fully.

The analysis of criticisms also suggested that the overall document might be shortened and the major conclusions set forth somewhat more succinctly. While an expanded description of the alternative finance plans seemed unnecessary, we thought it would be useful to insert additional information on current legal decisions, particularly decisions in districts that served large numbers of

black children. In keeping with the research of Mills and Jellison (1968) demonstrating that people are more responsive to ideas communicated by those whom they perceive to be similar to themselves, we thought it wise in our rewrite to quote, if at all possible, several public figures of high status in black communities.

4. Group IV - Middle-Income Whites

a. Group Description

Group IV consisted of fifty white respondents earning between $10,000 and $15,000 per year. Forty-seven of the fifty individuals selected completed the questionnaire. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents (the largest percentage of all four groups) read the entire document. Sixty-two percent of these, also devoted more than a half-hour to their reading. Roughly one of every five respondents failed to complete the entire reading. In most instances, these indivduals omitted responses to some of the questionnaire items. For the total group, the percentage of item omission ranged from 14% to 23%.

To a striking degree, the middle-income white respondents offered a far greater number of "additional comments" than any of the other three groups. In specific, 28% of the "complete readers" and 9% of the "partial readers" added comments. Most of these remarks were constructive criticisms, serving to reinforce individual points of view previously noted in the questionnaire. Many persons, however, also interjected personal attitudes regarding the booklet's format and subject matter. A

number of the respondents said that while they themselves understood the material, others might have difficulty in comprehending it. Without question, the middle-income white respondents were far more interested in the topic and its dissemination than any of the other readers.

The data on Group III is summarized in the charts that follow:

N = 47

PERCENTAGES FOR GROUP IV

Criticisms of "PAYING FOR OUR SCHOOLS"

Percent

1. Did you read the booklet from "cover to cover"? Yes 79% No 21%

2. Approximately, how much time did you spend reading the booklet?

Percent of "Incomplete" readers		Percent of "Complete" readers
20%	Less than 15 minutes	3%
30%	15 - 30 minutes	35%
0%	30 - 60 minutes	57%
0%	more than 60 minutes	5%
50%	No response	

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Read, but No Response*	Not Read, No Response**
	Percent					
3. If this booklet had been at a magazine stand, its outside cover would have caught my eye.	0%	40%	11%	36%	0%	13%
4. The absence of a table of contents and page numbers made the booklet more difficult to follow.	2%	13%	4%	68%	0%	13%
5. The language was too complicated.	6%	15%	15%	51%	0%	13%
6. Graphs and illustrations would make the booklet more readable.	17%	51%	2%	17%	0%	13%
7. After reading this booklet once, I feel a group discussion is needed to make its message clear.	13%	34%	6%	30%	4%	13%

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Read, but No Response*	Not Read, No Response**
8. The four alternative plans for financing are confusing because not enough information was given about each of them.	6%	28%	0%	45%	6%	15%
9. The "paragraph after paragraph" style of the booklet was monotonous.	6%	34%	2%	43%	2%	13%
10. The booklet was too long.	7%	19%	2%	55%	4%	13%
11. The booklet stimulated my interest in educational financing, and I would like to read more on this topic.	4%	45%	0%	32%	4%	15%
12. The information contained in the booklet should have been divided into two booklets - one containing background information, and the other the alternative plans.	2%	6%	7%	70%	2%	13%
13. The booklet spent too much time on the court cases.	4%	17%	4%	58%	2%	15%
14. Some terms used in the booklet were not explained clearly enough.	2%	30%	0%	51%	4%	13%
15. The booklet takes for granted that the reader already knows a great deal about paying for schools.	11%	51%	0%	25%	0%	13%
16. After reading the booklet, I am more confused about educational financing than I was before.	4%	11%	4%	68%	0%	13%
17. If another booklet like this one were published on another topic dealing with education, I would read it.	6%	55%	0%	26%	0%	13%

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Read, but No Response*	Not Read, No Response**
18. The information in the booklet was too detailed to hold my attention.	11%	21%	2%	51%	2%	13%
19. I would recommend this booklet to my friends and relatives.	8%	43%	0%	30%	6%	13%
20. The information in the booklet should have been divided into chapters.	9%	15%	8%	51%	4%	13%
21. Too many unimportant and unnecessary facts were included in the booklet.	2%	24%	2%	49%	6%	17%
22. The booklet did not contain enough information to present a clear picture of educational financing.	6%	26%	0%	49%	4%	15%
23. Cartoons illustrating some of the points in the booklet would make it more interesting.	4%	34%	4%	45%	0%	13%
24. The booklet was too opinionated to present a clear picture of the four alternatives.	0%	4%	9%	74%	0%	13%
25. The information in the booklet would have been more believable to me if it had been presented in the newspaper.	0%	2%	21%	60%	0%	17%
26. A "question and answer" format would have held my attention more than the style used in the booklet.	6%	30%	9%	40%	2%	13%

27. The information would have been more interesting to me if it had been presented:

		Percent		
On a television show	Yes	53%	No	26%
On a radio talk show		32%		47%
In a lecture followed by a question and answer period		55%		32%
In a group discussion		62%		25%

28. Other comments: (For example, if you did not read all of the booklet, please say why)

(See next page)

* "Read, but No Response" means that the respondent read the document from "cover to cover" but did not answer the question.

** "Not Read, No Response" means that the respondent did not read the document from "cover to cover" and did not answer the question.

GROUP IV

Other Comments

A. Respondents who read booklet from cover to cover:

1. Interesting little book. Read it in a hurry. Needed more emphasis in dark type to relieve monotony of type. Laid out well. Needs more graphs.

2. Interest in subject low; do not own property or have children.

3. I felt that the introduction was too long and the details of population growth excessive and confusing.

4. Too much detail. Good idea. Needs simplifying and shortening. Biased. Very informative.

5. Wouldn't have read it if I hadn't been asked. Interest never caught on, with subject. People never came to group discussions. Liked format of book. Had other distractions while reading it.

6. To me a comparison of the 4 types of financing would have been clearer if they were shown in table or chart form or listing the way schools are financed and the % paid for by the various governments, i.e., local, city, state, and federal.

7. Oversimplified language. Not able to read selectively. Type face bad. Too general. Chicken scratchy. Anyone interested in school finance won't find the book helpful. Anyone who knows nothing, won't wade through it. On newstand never. Good to hand out at lecture.

8. Perhaps because I am employed in the school system and am vitally concerned with what happens to the Dayton schools as well as those across the country, I read the booklet thoroughly. However, I feel the intent of this type of booklet should be to get the attention of the people of "middle

A. Respondents who read booklet from cover to cover:

America" - the so called "silent majority" who continue to defeat tax levies, etc. for funding our schools. The people who already are interested in schools will (fairly) readily read this. The language is much too "deep" for these people - it should be stated in terms of how it - i.e. funding for schools - affects the tax payer. Illustrations - not graphs; nor necessarily cartoons - would make the booklet less monotonous. It needs to be "livened up" (it reminded me too much of my husband's tax and law journals - which are dull reading - unless it's your field). As for attracting attention (#3) - I think it would have to be larger - more outstanding in design to attract the interest of most people. I thank the people who worked on this - it is so important! But - let's get it more exciting!

9. Outline form.

10. Outline form would be easier to read. Should be broken up more.

11. Tedious reading, but don't know why - almost text-bookish. Well written though.

12. The terminology and phraseology was a bit confusing. The idea of the 3rd alternative escaped me altogether. I understood most of the book but only after reading it very carefully and plowing - sometimes rereading passages.

13. Too boring! Some areas opinionated, in that generalizations and assumptions were presented as facts.

14. Reads too difficult for general public; for educators or those really interested (P.T.A., etc.) it is O.K.

15. Should be more explicit. Attacked a deep problem rather superficially.

16. Hard to stick with it. Interesting, but would not have read it otherwise. #22 needed more local

A. Respondents who read booklet from cover to cover:

emphasis. #25 - not to be read in a newspaper if it were this long. Would read shorter version. Needed page numbers. Like pictures or graphs. Like study material, so text-bookish.

17. Very informative. Didn't know anything at all about financing before.

18. Picture of dollar bill or graduation cap more visually interesting. Didn't like the type set - more white space. Shorter presentation, simpler language. Outline or graph would have been helpful.

19. Too vague. Illustrations needed - (pie-shaped?) Too general. Specific examples would be better in various school districts.

20. #27 - Good alternatives, but don't replace reading. Good supplement, for the book. What do we do now?

21. "Arts" should not be considered demeaning, (Slow learners). Arts are essential dimensions of a balanced education. Has attitude that local control is a good thing. Student subsidy should be covered. Booklet assumes that education will always be the same. Consultants all university people. Why no people from business familiar with funding?

22. Under putting the plan into action:
    1. You referred to taxes based on wealth as (property) - You said earlier property did not equal wealth.
    2. A sales tax is always repressive to the poor - you did not acknowledge that.
    3. None of the 4 plans really did the job - surely there are better proposals.
    4. In making the point that education is going to cost more you didn't stress tnat a change in tax structure would be more based on ability to pay (higher income) than the property tax.

23. Scattered paragraph form hard to read. Like regular "book" form better.

A. Respondents who read booklet from cover to cover:

24. "Affluent cake and ate it too" misleading. Paying high taxes there although tax rate may be lower. Some states richer than. Doubt if it is meant to be objective. People with children should be paying taxes per child for education. Larger families should be carrying their load if they insist on having big families.

25. Too wordy. For someone who has no background in school financing might have trouble with terms.

26. Wasn't very easy reading. Had trouble retaining what was read.

27. I was disappointed that there was no financing program based upon number of children in school. People who have many children should be taxed more heavily than people who have none or only one or two. I don't believe property taxes are the best way to finance schools. People can live in apartments all their lives and get off scot-free for financing schools.

B. Respondents who did not read booklet from cover to cover:

1. Swamped with work.

2. Ran out of time.

3. Had no time to read it.

4. Forgot to read it.

5. Fell asleep several times - Not very interesting. Too dry. Hard to get through it.

6. Print too tiny. Looks like overwhelming to read. That put me off.

7. Out-of-town company prevented my reading it.

8. Can't get enough info into "question-answer" format. Could be edited tighter, to hold interest.

B. Respondents who did not read booklet from cover to cover:

9. Looks boring. Looked like it was going to pursue a particular course of financing (from the cover letter) that to me is screwed up.

The preceding synthesis of the questionnaire data was based upon the percentages, for all groups, as set forth earlier in this section. A further analysis of this data was carried out using an Index of Favorability. This Index can be calculated on Likert-type items, similar to those used in our questionnaire. It serves to simplify the data so that it can be used with greater convenience. In lieu of working with percentage figures for each response, as well as for each category of "no response," the statistic yields a single number that expresses a group's relative favorableness, unfavorableness, or neutralness on any one item. In brief, a strong response (strongly agree; strongly disagree) is weighted twice as much as a moderate response (agree; disagree). In calculating the Index, the number of respondents to an item is taken into account, as is the number of non-classifiable responses, and the number who did not respond to the item. In effect, the use of the Index reduces the four-six percentage figures associated with an item to one number. This greatly simplifies comparisons among groups and between the different administrations of the questionnaire. The Index ranges from +100 to -100, illustrating the range of response by each individual.

The formula used in calculating the Index of Favorability is:

$$\frac{100\ [(2\ SA + 1\ A) - (1\ D + 2\ SD)]}{2[N - (NC + NA)]}$$

where:
SA = strongly agree
A = agree
SD = strongly disagree
D = disagree
NC = nonclassifiable
NA = no answer; don't know
N = number in group

The indices were calculated from the percentage totals using 100 = N.

Quest.	Group I	Group II	Group III	Group IV
3.	-34.	-21.80	-43.33	-31.04
4.	-16.	-10.	-31.16	-34.14
5.	+ 6.	+ 3.13	-22.00	-31.04
6.	+22.	+16.42	+ 3.33	+36.78
7.	+33.33	+18.25	+ 1.67	+10.84
8.	+12.50	+25.69	-12.96	- 3.16
9.	- 6.25	+11.43	+ 9.08	- .59
10.	-25.	+ 5.33	-43.33	-15.66
11.	+ 2.16	+15.38	-21.24	+12.97
12.	0.	+ .80	-26.23	-47.65
13.	- 4.34	- .71	- 6.90	-25.30
14.	+27.27	+38.89	- 2.18	-20.48
15.	+44.57	+26.00	+18.12	+27.59
16.	+ 4.35	+11.33	- 6.72	-32.76
17.	- 8.70	+36.81	+ 1.79	+23.56
18.	-41.30	+ 6.76	-13.77	- 7.06
19.	-21.74	+ 8.09	-26.92	+17.90
20.	- 4.35	+ .74	+22.92	-20.48
21.	+10.87	+10.	+11.11	-16.23
22.	+19.57	+27.42	+27.05	- 6.79
23.	+26.09	- 5.88	-30.60	- 6.32
24.	0.	- 7.50	- 8.70	-50.58
25.	-53.26	-30.77	+35.19	-60.24
26.	+18.18	+ 5.97	+15.08	- 9.41

With this summary data, it is possible to tell at a glance whether the averaged reaction to a given item is positive or negative, and whether the reactions are similar or diverse. Those indices near zero, for example, indicate bipolarity in attitudes within the group, with approximately equal numbers agreeing or disagreeing with the statement.

b. Criticism of Format

On the whole, the middle-income white readers were not highly critical of the format. Like the other groups, however, they manifested little initial enthusiasm for the topic. Had an examination of the document not been necessitated by the experiment, it is unlikely that they would, of their own volition, have displayed any real interest in the subject. The readers had little to quibble with in the document's structure: The absence of a table of contents was not missed, the length seemed appropriate, there was no particular desire to have the content subdivided into chapters, and the organization did not seem difficult to follow.

The majority did not consider the paragraph-after-paragraph form monotonous; and therefore, did not think a question-and-answer format would have provided any special advantage. Although there was some preference expressed for the introduction of graphs and other illustrations, a majority of the respondents felt that the use of cartoons would be distracting. There were few complaints about the language, and most readers thought that the technical terms were sufficiently well explained. The foregoing would seem to suggest that the original writers aimed

their prose at the comparatively literate middle-class citizen accustomed to dealing with contemporary social issues and reasonably comfortable with the language used in newspapers.

In general, habitual newspaper readers responded more favorably to the document than those who were not. This suggests, of course, that efforts to inform the public about educational issues should not be restricted to the print medium alone; for example, ideas expressed in print could conceivably be distorted by audiences who prefer spoken messages.

c. Content Criticism

The readers were generally pleased with both the type and amount of information contained in the document. Differing significantly from readers in lower socioeconomic groups, the respondents did not consider the information too detailed nor the supporting factual material unimportant or unnecessary. The description of the court cases received favorable reaction, as did the explanation of alternative financing procedures. There was, nevertheless, a distinct feeling that the material was too esoteric for easy comprehension. Since this finding paralleled our results in all of the other groups, we were forced to acknowledge that the document did not provide a sufficiently

comprehensible introduction to the problem.

Happily, in the case of Group IV readers, as in that of Group III, the respondents did not sense an undue amount of prejudice or bias. We found this outcome gratifying on two counts: First, we had tried hard to produce an objective treatment of the issue; and second, since research studies on the communication process (Goldiamond, 1959) suggest that obvious propaganda and other strongly persuasive communications are often least effective in generating attitudinal change, we had reason to believe that a legitimate presentation of the underlying facts would accomplish greater good.

d. Reader Effect

The responses from Group IV indicated that the outgrowth of the reading was generally positive. Following the reading, the individuals thought themselves a good deal better informed about the problems of educational finance. Most found that their interest in the topic had been heightened by the booklet. Not only did a majority of the readers say that they would welcome another such document on a different topic, but many also expressed a desire to read more on the matter of school support. In addition, the largest number also

expressed a willingness to recommend the booklet to their friends. (In point of fact, the Coalition later received a number of unsolicited requests for additional copies, all of which were prompted by the experimental dissemination among middle-income white citizens in Dayton, Ohio.)

These outcomes lead to another theoretical construct that may have general applicability. The consequence of racial discrimination in America, sustained over a long period of years, is that underprivileged citizens are predominately interested in the betterment of their own welfare. Enforced second-class citizenship, moreover, may also have caused those victimized to shun social causes out of a ubiquitious anger and resentment directed toward people in power. As a result, when different economic and racial groups are compared, it is not surprising that the privileged majority exhibit a greater tendency toward social consciousness. Even in the case of middle-income black citizens -- individuals who have already won the hard battle to improve their economic standing -- the profound lust for a continuing redress of social inequity can easily overshadow conventional altruism. This is particularly true in situations where the dominant white majority still appear to have

sizable advantage, as in public-supported schooling. It seems equally valid to argue, in this connection, that only with time and the elimination of economic and social discrimination can matters improve.

e. Alternative Preferences

Despite their general satisfaction, Group IV expressed considerable interest in alternate media presentations. For example, many respondents would have enjoyed an opportunity to review the document's points in a group discussion. Similarly, a large number would have welcomed either a lecture or a public affairs television program. Here again, the media preferences of an affluent, literate, social-minded population stand distinct from those of other socioeconomic groups. The only negative media rating was assigned to radio. It should be observed, in this regard, that virtually all respondents in all groups expressed similar disfavor. Seemingly, then, whatever the medium's other virtues, radio apparently has little usefulness as a device for informing the public about social problems.

One other result is worth special note: The white middle-income respondents were of the belief that the information presented in the document was more credible

than what they might ordinarily find in the newspaper. When this finding emerged, we wondered whether it was attributable to the poor repute of Dayton's press. In subsequent checks, however, we determined that both of the city's newspapers are well-regarded and that people everywhere seem to be growing more concerned about the accuracy of newspaper coverage on controversial issues.

f. Suggested Document Revisions

Apart from a somewhat more complete explanation of the overall problem, the middle-income whites asked for relatively few revisions. In short, organization, language, use of technical terms, and paragraph flow were seen as acceptable.

If supplements to the printed presentation, or the use of alternate modes, were to be considered, Group IV seemed most interested in an activity that would provide two-way feedback. Presumably, this means that they would welcome an opportunity to either ask secondary questions or to ventilate their own points of view. Since the society clearly seems to be moving toward an age of involvement -- characterized by wider citizen interest in social issues and by a growing realization

that people are likely to get from their government only what they demand -- this resistance to unidirectional communication is understandable.

5. Analysis and Summary of Needed Changes

By synthesizing the data derived from the four groups of critical responses, we were able to specify the kinds of changes needed to accommodate each social group's preferred taste in printed communications. In arriving at these specifications, we based our decisions not only on the responses to the questionnaire, but also on the comments of individual group members and on the suggestions of the interviewers.

The communications requirements of low-income blacks and whites are remarkably similar. The critical difference between the two groups had to do with perceived pertinence; whereas low-income black citizens were predominantly concerned that inadequate spending results in an inferior quality of schooling for black children, low-income white citizens were more bothered by their conviction that rich exert a greater power over the public schools than the poor. Neither group seemed particularly worried about the high cost of education, although this was a common complaint among both of the middle-income groups.

In addition to an appropriate slanting of the material, the specific suggestions for the Group I and Group II

revisions included (1) simplifing the language, (2) clarifying the technical terms, (3) expanding the background information on school finance, (4) clarifying the four alternative plans, (5) adding graphs and charts to contrast the four plans, (6) eliminating unimportant and unnecessary details, and (7) making the cover more attractive.

In the main, these criticisms are consistent with the sociological findings of Barber (1961) to the effect that lower class people are less facile in reading and writing, know less about political issues, and have little incentive to become socially informed. In our low-income white group, for example, no one expressed any particular interest in the reactions of other readers in his own group, or in those given by people in other groups. Our interviewers discovered, moreover, that those readers least interested in the contents of the document -- both before and after reading -- were on welfare. Put baldly, the afflictions of poverty are such that its victims have a defective self-concept. Many of the leaders in both low-income groups took the position that no matter <u>how</u> taxes were levied, the people would still have to pay for the schools. Therefore, it mattered little whether the taxes were local, state, or federal. The one fact that became unmistakably clear to our

low-income readers was that, whatever the system, they would spend a larger portion of their income than the more affluent. In the words of one respondent: "No matter how you put it together, us poor folks pay through the nose, while the rich folks spend their loose change."

These findings lend fresh weight to some of the earlier conclusions of social scientists (Knutner, 1947) with respect to the linkage between economic and psychological disadvantage. Economic hardship appears to destroy the individual's sense of self-importance, thereby decreasing his willingness to participate in many facets of the middle-class culture. In turn, there is, among the poor, a reduced striving for success, debilitating awareness of their limited opportunity, and a corresponding failure to value education as the normal avenue toward higher status (Barber, 1961). On this score, we decided that a major aim, in rewriting the document for Group I, should be that of explaining the economic relevance of the information.

Racial variation in communications preferences were more apparent at the middle-income levels than at the low-income ones. Middle-class black citizens saw personal relevance in the issue of school finance and were deeply

concerned about its local ramifications. The middle class whites, on the other hand, less burdened by problems of social status, found it somewhat easier to take an altruistic point of view. They saw, in the problem of school finance, national as well as personal implications. Both black groups, in contrast, were inclined to see the problem as: "school finance and the black question." Understandably, they are mindful that the recent improvement in their situation was the result of an activist posture.

In particular, blacks who have made small economic gains have a deep appreciation of what financial advancement can mean, and as a consequence, tend to press for more. Perhaps preconsciously, they recognize that the frequency of vertical mobility tends to vary with the degree to which all classes have equal access to educational opportunity. (Freedman, et al. 1956). The more a society emphasizes education, and the more it prohibits schooling from becoming the special prerogative of any select group, the more likely it is that interchange among social ranks will continue. As Gross (1958) has observed, an education cannot be inherited. In an unforeseen development, Christopher Jencks' controversial study "Inequality" was published near the end of our project. One of his major

conclusions -- namely, that better education will not materially increase the adult earnings of disadvantaged children -- is almost certain to be viewed by the poor as counterfeit propaganda designed to deprive them of better schools.

Where the middle-income blacks saw the problem of school finance as relating to economic and social mobility, the middle-income whites saw the problem in terms of a defective educational system. Many of our middle class white readers, for example, were unable to resist an opportunity to offer opinions on a wide variety of matters unconnected with the questionnaire, adding footnotes and making insertions in the margins. Several even wrote lengthy treatises on the back of the questionnaire pages. While the nature of their complaints varied across a wide variety of issues, there was a common belief that somehow the schools "are not as good as they should be." Of greatest importance, the readers' concerns mirrored the time-honored custom wherein citizens feel free to fault the schools for all of society's social ills. In varying degrees, the women's movement, the sexual revolution, the venereal disease epidemic, moral degeneracy, the war in Vietnam, and even the high price of food, were attributed to the educational system.

Despite the irrationality of some of these criticisms, it was obvious that our middle-income white respondents saw a causal relationship between public education and society's social condition.

Summing up matters, then, we adduced that the central thrust of the revision for Group I should emphasize the plight of poor black people; that for Group II should emphasize the social injustices stemming from poverty; the personal interest theme for Group III should be geared toward the problems of racial and economic mobility; and the revision for Group IV, composed of middle-income whites, should relate to the larger social problems connected with public schooling. All of which is to say, that howsoever objective a communications package, diverse audiences will invariably select that which is uppermost in their minds.

In a manner of speaking, our program of revisions represented a compromise between the acceptable and the optimal. While we did not go the full length in re-tailoring the document, we did make a large number of substantial improvements. It should be remembered, however, that our goal was as much a matter of studying a new process as that of producing a new collection of products. It was, therefore, a justifiable compromise. With respect to

the process, however, some observations on our liabilities probably are in order.

An honest project -- and there should be no other kind -- acknowledges weakness as well as strength. We should be remiss, consequently, if we did not draw attention to our sins of omission and commission. Some of these errors were the inevitable consequence of an ambitious study, seeking to stretch its budget to the utmost; some were out-and-out mistakes. Whatever the cause, they should have their recital, for to pretend that the study was virtuous beyond fault would be less than honorable.

The questionnaire used to obtain criticisms of the document was less than ideal. Some of the questions, for example, provided no real clues to revision. In addition, many of the statements posed a double question. ("The booklet stimulated my interest in educational financing, and I would like to read more on this topic.") As a result, the responses we acquired may have, in certain instances, been somewhat ambiguous.

Another problem stemmed from our effort to cover a great deal of investigative ground, in a short period of time, with a minimal investment of dollars. Because of this overload, some of the quesions lacked the explicitness

that normally would characterize an investigation of this sort. In an item, such as "too many unnecessary and unimportant facts were included in the booklet", for instance, we obtained a general reaction, but had no way of determining which facts were regarded by the respondent as important and which were considered unimportant. Similarly, we discovered whether the reader regarded the document as biased and subjective, but we did not learn precisely which statements he may have regarded as too opinionated. It would be fraudulent, therefore, to pretend that the revisions were based upon an extremely comprehensive and tightly controlled body of data.

It should also be said that no attempt was made to verify the income level of each respondent; instead we depended upon financial information obtained from agency records in the three cities involved. The odds are that these records are reasonably accurate. However, since random inaccuracies could conceivably have existed, the absence of verification must be noted. Our interviewers, paid far less than par, had only minimal training. Here again, we reckoned that in view of our larger objectives, the risk was minimal, as the interviewers' task was simply to tabulate expressed preferences on a form. Nonetheless, it is only proper to point out that limited training of the

interviewers occurred. Further, because of our desire to use status leaders as investigators, we had no choice but to risk the dangers associated with peer friendships. In addition, as the report has already noted, we did not, in our queries, make any effort to discriminate between race and income; hence, we cannot determine whether the respondents were influenced more by one than the other. However, since such a discrimination was not essential to our purpose, and since it would have posed substantial design problems, we settled for what we got.

Finally, it should be made clear that the percentages, across groups, are not directly comparable. The number of respondents varied from group to group, and within each group the number of individuals responding to the questions fluctuated as well.

We do not mean, by these admissions, to deprecate the value of our effort, or to impugn the general worth of the study. We believe that, on balance, our evidence is reasonably valid, and that -- even with the expenditure of greater amounts of money, time, and energy -- our end conclusions would not have changed. Inasmuch as our basic intent was to go beyond the typical targeted research project, and -- within the normal dollar budget -- to manufacturer some new theoretical insights to go along

with the usual products, our methodology seems reasonably defensible.

C. Revising and Targeting the Document

Once the initial responses from the four groups were safely in our data bag, the next step was to use the criticisms in retailoring the basic document to the expressed preferences of each group. We were confronted at this point, with a serious dilemma: It was not possible, because of budget limitations, to give each group precisely what it wanted. We were aware, for example, that in the case of some of the groups, a medium other than print would be of greatest use to the particular audience. But our project commitment was to prepare four prose variations of a targeted research paper. In addition, since the fundamental purpose of the targeted communication was that of providing the Office of Education with a dissemination product, and since we had no way of predicting which, if any, version of the statement might eventually be distributed, we resolved the dilemma by proceeding according to plan in the preparation of the four variations. In so doing, however, we omitted some of the reader requests, and we did not invest funds in the production of cartoons, graphs, and other visuals. Our reasoning was

that once the project report had been delivered and evaluated and subsequent decisions made regarding distribution and dissemination, these omissions could be corrected with greater efficacy.

To make clear what we did and did not do with respect to each particular revision clue, we have listed below both the requests of each group and the changes that were made.

Revisions - Group I

What They Asked For

- Simplified language and terminology
- Cartoons and graphic illustrations
- More localized information
- Additional clarifying information on alternative plans
- Additional background information on school finance
- Opportunity to participate in group discussions
- A more readable text
- Use of questions and answers

What We Did

- Simplified language
- Introduced additional local information on Chicago and New York (anticipated sites for the secondary testing)
- Increased emphasis on poverty and other reader concerns
- Introduced story line to stimulate interest
- Used a modified question-and-answer format
- Added additional information on present finance systems
- Eliminated a substantial amount of supportive detail, particularly that involving finance statistics
- Condensed description of court cases
- Eliminated the section on "Educational Value"
- Enlarged the section "Does Money Really Make a Difference," adding reference material from the Jencks report
- Reduced and simplified the section on alternative plans
- Added an appendix
- Varied, to the extent possible, the typography
- Emphasized ethnic concerns

Revisions - Group II

What They Asked For

- Simplified language and terminology
- Graphic illustrations
- Additional background information on school finance
- Additional information on alternative plans
- Opportunity for subsequent group discussion
- Use of questions and answers

What We Did

- Introduced questions and answers
- Added more information on school finance
- Added more information on alternative plans
- Emphasized importance of quality education for poor children
- Interjected more human interest material
- Introduced information on local finance problems
- Eliminated some supportive detail
- Shortened section on "Educational Value"
- Condensed description of court cases
- Added new ideas on education and income

Revisions - Group III

What They Asked For

- Increased human interest features
- Greater connection with local events
- Additional background information on school finance
- Restructuring of text into sections
- Use of questions and answers

What We Did

- Eliminated secondary supporting facts
- Added additional background information
- Reduced the section on court cases
- Emphasized black racial concerns
- Introduced additional information on Chicago
- Used questions as section organizers
- Added relevant quotes from black leaders
- Added new human interest material

Revisions - Group IV

What They Asked For

- More readable format

- Opportunity for group discussion
- Use of graphs and illustrations
- Additional detail
- A more comprehensive scope

What We Did

- Added information on performance contracting and vouchers
- Increased the readability factor
- Reorganized the format
- Introduced new information on court decisions
- Added additional human interest material

Our method in carrying out the revisions followed the dictates of logic. We engaged a new batch of professional writers, forearmed them with the original document and the specifications for revision, and asked that they create four new documents each targeted at one of the particular cultural groups with which we had worked. To enhance the targeting, we told the writers that the secondary tests were planned for Chicago and New York and asked that they use local-color material appropriate to these two cities.

As has already been made apparent, we did not, in every instance, follow all of the clues derived from our critical responses. Aside from the fact that the logistics for some of the requested changes were prohibitive, we also wished to incorporate alterations suggested by the interviewers and by our own inferential hunches. For example, in developing the targeted communications package for Group III (middle-income blacks) we turned to Ebony magazine, a prosperous, slick, success-oriented monthly, widely read by the black middle class, for indicators. Ebony is written by black people for black people about black people. It mostly features bright success stories of black life, shunning issues and dealing instead with personalities. From our analysis we acquired stratagems that we hoped would make the finance document more appealing to its intended audience. Ebony readers, for instance, have a strong preference for optimism; they like to feel that a problem is solved or on its way to being solved. Thus, we sought in the revision to interject positive comments by prominent black personalities and to suggest that the financial problems of the public school -- particularly with reference to black children -- stood a good chance of improving.

Similarly, in the revision for the middle-income whites, Group IV, we added a large amount of information on other related topics not included in the basic document. We judged from our critical evaluation that these readers could absorb additional information without undue difficulty and that the additions would heighten their interest. At the same time, since Group IV did not express any dissatisfaction with the informational volume, we did not condense the descriptions of court cases or alternative plans and we retained most of the facts and figures regarding school costs. This, of course, ran counter to our revisions for the other groups, but it seemed to have substantial justification.

Another factor we thought it wise to respect, in our targeting procedure, was that of balancing for racial concerns. In the past, community attitude surveys have shown that persons in the lower strata of the class structure are generally less critical of the schools than those at the upper level (Charter, 1962). One would assume that this uncritical attitude of the lower classes would generalize to communications about education. However, we found just the opposite effect in the reactions to Paying for Our Schools. The low-income groups were much more critical than those from the middle-income levels. In part, this

enlarged criticism may stem from the traditional antagonism of the less affluent toward print as a communications medium. But it is more likely that the negative attitudes arose, first, from a direct opportunity to ventilate feelings (a relatively uncommon occurrence in social research); second, from the realization that the criticisms would actually be put to constructive use (also a relatively rare circumstance in social surveys); and third, from the group belief that improvement in the welfare of black Americans is closely linked to quality education.

It was, perhaps, for this reason that both of our black groups were very interested in the alternative plans. Obviously, in a society dominated by white middle class interests, minority factions cannot avoid the fear that any contemplated change might work to their disadvantage. For blacks know, through bitter experience, that a monopoly on learning is an ancient device used to protect the advantage of the ruling class (Kahl, 1962). Historically, access to, and use of, education has been the primary means through which the lower classes have moved upward. Education, in other words, was seen, not as valuable in itself, but as a route to a social goal. Until very recently, this valuation was less characteristic of low-income black people than of other groups. Now, however,

matters appear to have changed and poor black people are a good deal more aware of the dollar benefits of quality education. It may be, then, that the tendency of both our white groups to view the document less critically than the black ones was more a function of ethnic identification than of intellectual disagreement. In our revisions, therefore, we tried to counterbalance these anxieties by emphasizing the advantages of a financing system that would benefit poor black children.

It was in this regard that the appearance of the much publicized study by Jencks complicated the situation. Although we did not, in the revision, either support or reject Jencks's postulation that better schooling would not materially improve the economic status of black children in adulthood, we did point out that access to high-salaried vocations was heavily influenced by the extent of an individual's education.

These minor problems excepted, the revisions proceeded without undue difficulty. And as they were completed, we began to set the stage for the next phase in the operation -- testing the worth of the revisions with new groups of citizens in two different cities.

D. Secondary Testing

Armed with our freshly revised documents, each tailored to the preferences of one of the four groups earlier surveyed, we went to New York and Chicago to launch the secondary testing. The choice of these cities was purely arbitrary. Virtually any large urban area could have been chosen, but because the Coalition had already established liason with individuals in Chicago and New York who could appropriately serve as field agents, these two locales seemed desirable. By moving our explorations away from the initial site of Dayton, we were able to obtain fresh audiences and a different auxillary staff.

Because of the multiplicity of variables and our larger purpose, the secondary testing was more complex than the primary. There were, in this secondary assessment, three major goals: first, to verify the accuracy of our revisions -- determing when possible, whether changes in style and language made each revised statement more appropriate for its intended audience; second, to judge the degree of consistency between Dayton, Chicago, and New York -- determining whether individuals of similar socioeconomic background, in different geographical areas,

would react to the document in somewhat the same way; and third, to compare five different dissemination strategies, determining whether they add a differential effect on reader interest and involvement.

As in the preliminary testing, our method was straightforward and relatively simple. We began by hiring four field agents two black and two white. The auxillary staff consisted of four community leaders: a black minister in Chicago; a black social worker in Harlem; a white minister in Long Island; and a white assistant school superintendent in Arlington Heights (a middle class suburb of Chicago).

In keeping with our previous procedure, we relied upon these field agents -- each of whom was recognized as a status leader in his community -- to select the test population. And, to restrict our expenditures, we again relied upon telephone conversations to obtain audience feedback. These audiences, although situated in four different geographical regions, provided a parallel to our earlier investigation in Dayton. Viewed in the whole, the secondary testing involved a group of low-income whites living in Long Island, New York; a group of middle-income whites in Arlington Heights, Illinois; a group of low-income blacks, some residing in Harlem and some in Chicago; and, finally, a group of middle-income black people, similarly divided between Harlem and Chicago.

Our central purpose was to answer, as best we could, several important questions. We needed to learn, for example, whether our revisions of the basic document had resulted in a statement with greater potential appeal for its intended audience. Further, we needed to discover whether these audiences -- distinguished by race and income -- might react similarly to the revised statements. Finally, since we intended to use five different procedures in disseminating the revised statements, we needed to determine whether one method held advantage over another. To amplify, we knew from previous research that the quality of a communications package is only one factor in audience reaction; and since a number of different devices are commonly used to broadcast such communications messages, it would be of great interest, we reasoned, to learn the effect of each.

Foregoing normal controls for a random sampling, using particular groups of people selected on the basis of their race and earnings, we contrasted the following five dissemination treatments:

(a) Direct Delivery (mailing or handing the package to an individual, with an invitation to read).

(b) Leader Distribution (personal delivery by a status leader, with strong urging to read).

(c) Media Reinforcement (leader distribution, non-personal, coupled with radio and television).

(d) Multiple Short-Term Exposure (direct delivery in which the package is delivered three times, in three smaller sections, to achieve multiple exposure).

(e) Follow-up Task (leader distribution coupled with follow-up group discussions during which elements of this package are debated).

Our desire to increase the comprehensiveness of the experiment was great. To appease this excessive appetite, we were obliged to operate, at times, with a somewhat crude design. Our ultimate goal, however, was less that of obtaining definitive answers than of flushing-out promising new avenues of research. We wanted, in other words, to study the possibilities for further study. As a consequence, the research results described below should be viewed more as useful implications than as absolute directives.

1. Verification of Revisions

To verify the usefulness of our revisions, we began by modifying our original questionnaire. In general these modifications consisted of the elimination of some questionnaire items (primarily those used to generate the revision clues) and the addition of several new ones. The new items were necessitated by our effort to use the questionnaire both for evaluating the revisions and also, for the purpose of comparing the alternative dissemination strategies.

As the succeeding charts demonstrate, the revisions clearly improved the document's attractiveness. All groups, in short, found a good deal less to criticize in the material they read. This increase in package appeal, of course, is hardly a point over which to gloat. When one complains of the blandness of a dish, the addition of salt and pepper is not likely to offend the eater; inasmuch as the corrections were based on earlier weaknesses, it was logical to assume that the altered documents would meet with greater approval.

We have no way of knowing, unfortunately, whether the geographical shift from Dayton to other locales influenced the readers' reactions. Although it would have

been possible to control for this variable, the complications would have been excessive. We preferred, therefore, to settle for the absence of a control mechanism and to regard the results as conditional. However, the evidence from existing sociological research appears to be in our favor: although regional differences in community attitude do exist in various parts of the nation, (notably between the north and the south) urban populations, such as those found in New York, Chicago, and Dayton, tend to be somewhat similar. But of greatest consequence, the deliberate effort to tailor the document to the expectations of a particular strata of the population, would lead one to assume that the tailoring should improve the fit.

By comparing items of specific criticism in the primary and secondary administration of the questionnaire, we were able to deduce that on the whole revisions reduced the amount of negative reaction. For example, if a large percentage of low-income black readers in the first testing felt that the basic document was too remote from the concerns of the black community, and if, in the second testing, a relatively small percentage of such readers regarded this as a fault, it is reasonable to assume that the changes achieved their purpose. Tables indicating the comparative percentages for all four groups, on selected questionnaire items, are cited on the following pages.

Comparative Percentages For Group I

First and Second Criticisms of
"PAYING FOR OUR SCHOOLS"

	First Testing					Second Testing				
	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response
1. The language was too complicated.	2%	6%	2%	40%	50%	1%	2%	7%	58%	32%
2. The four alternative plans for financing are confusing because not enough information was given about each of them.	2%	29%	4%	13%	52%	1%	8%	14%	45%	32%
3. The paragraph-after-paragraph style of the booklet was monotonous.	2%	19%	2%	25%	52%	2%	9%	19%	39%	31%
4. The booklet was too long.	0%	13%	2%	33%	52%	1%	4%	15%	47%	33%
5. The booklet stimulated my interest in educational financing, and I would like to read more on this topic.	6%	17%	4%	19%	54%	17%	36%	7%	8%	32%
6. The booklet spent too much time on the court cases.	0%	21%	0%	25%	54%	1%	4%	21%	43%	31%

Group I

	First Testing					Second Testing				
	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response
7. Some terms used in the booklet were not explained clearly enough.	2%	31%	0%	11%	56%	0%	5%	24%	39%	32%
8. The booklet takes for granted that the reader already knows a great deal about paying for schools.	15%	21%	0%	10%	54%	3%	3%	24%	37%	33%
9. After reading the booklet, I am more confused about educational financing than I was before.	4%	21%	4%	17%	54%	0%	0%	31%	38%	31%
10. The information in the booklet was too detailed to hold my attention.	0%	6%	4%	36%	54%	1%	4%	39%	25%	31%
11. Too many unimportant and unnecessary facts were included in the booklet.	8%	17%	2%	19%	54%	2%	6%	19%	40%	33%
12. The booklet was too opinionated to present a clear picture of the four alternatives.	6%	17%	6%	17%	54%	6%	5%	27%	27%	35%
13. The information in the booklet would have been more believable if it had been presented in the newspaper.	0%	6%	15%	25%	54%	1%	1%	35%	30%	33%

Comparative Percentages For Group II

First and Second Criticisms of
"PAYING FOR OUR SCHOOLS"

	First Testing					Second Testing				
	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response
1. The language was too complicated.	8%	32%	3%	37%	20%	2%	2%	21%	57%	18%
2. The four alternative plans for financing are confusing because not enough information was given about each of them.	10%	42%	5%	15%	28%	4%	8%	29%	40%	19%
3. The paragraph-after-paragraph style of the booklet was monotonous.	15%	22%	3%	30%	30%	5%	8%	32%	35%	20%
4. The booklet was too long.	13%	22%	0%	40%	25%	7%	9%	23%	42%	19%
5. The booklet stimulated my interest in educational financing, and I would like to read more on this topic.	8%	32%	8%	22%	35%	13%	47%	8%	10%	22%
6. The booklet spent too much time on the court cases.	8%	25%	5%	32%	30%	6%	6%	33%	35%	20%

Group II

	First Testing					Second Testing				
	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response
7. Some terms used in the booklet were not explained clearly enough.	8%	52%	0%	12%	28%	3%	7%	18%	53%	19%
8. The booklet takes for granted that the reader already knows a great deal about paying for schools.	10%	47%	0%	18%	25%	9%	15%	19%	37%	20%
9. After reading the booklet, I am more confused about educational financing than I was before.	15%	25%	3%	32%	25%	2%	1%	17%	61%	19%
10. The information in the booklet was too detailed to hold my attention.	10%	27%	0%	37%	26%	5%	9%	22%	41%	23%
11. Too many unimportant and unnecessary facts were included in the booklet.	8%	27%	0%	30%	35%	6%	13%	26%	33%	22%
12. The booklet was too opinionated to present a clear picture of the four alternatives.	5%	18%	0%	37%	40%	2%	4%	31%	40%	23%
13. The information in the booklet would have been more believable if it had been presented in the newspaper.	0%	15%	5%	45%	35%	1%	2%	37%	41%	19%

Comparative Percentages For Group III

First and Second Criticisms of
"PAYING FOR OUR SCHOOLS"

	First Testing					Second Testing				
	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response
1. The language was too complicated.	0%	21%	0%	54%	25%	0%	0%	58%	21%	21%
2. The four alternative plans for financing are confusing because not enough information was given about each of them.	2%	17%	0%	35%	46%	2%	11%	31%	44%	22%
3. The paragraph-after-paragraph style of the booklet was monotonous.	2%	40%	2%	27%	29%	1%	13%	29%	36%	21%
4. The booklet was too long.	2%	2%	0%	71%	25%	2%	2%	29%	47%	20%
5. The booklet stimulated my interest in educational financing, and I would like to read more on this topic.	2%	19%	2%	50%	27%	12%	28%	18%	18%	24%
6. The booklet spent too much time on the court cases.	0%	25%	0%	33%	42%	2%	3%	38%	36%	21%

Group III

	First Testing					Second Testing				
	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response
7. Some terms used in the booklet were not explained clearly enough.	0%	33%	0%	36%	31%	1%	1%	29%	50%	19%
8. The booklet takes for granted that the reader already knows a great deal about paying for schools.	2%	44%	0%	23%	31%	2%	9%	18%	49%	22%
9. After reading the booklet, I am more confused about educational financing than I was before.	2%	27%	2%	36%	33%	0%	1%	48%	30%	21%
10. The information in the booklet was too detailed to hold my attention.	0%	25%	0%	44%	31%	0%	0%	29%	53%	19%
11. Too many unimportant and unnecessary facts were included in the booklet.	0%	21%	0%	33%	46%	0%	1%	11%	65%	23%
12. The booklet was too opinionated to present a clear picture of the four alternatives.	0%	19%	0%	27%	54%	1%	8%	18%	52%	21%
13. The information in the booklet would have been more believable if it had been presented in the newspaper.	0%	8%	0%	46%	46%	1%	2%	37%	40%	20%

Comparative Percentages For Group IV

First and Second Criticisms of
"PAYING FOR OUR SCHOOLS"

	First Testing					Second Testing				
	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response
1. The language was too complicated.	6%	15%	15%	51%	13%	2%	10%	39%	40%	9%
2. The four alternative plans for financing are confusing because not enough information was given about each of them.	6%	28%	0%	45%	21%	3%	5%	40%	44%	8%
3. The paragraph-after-paragraph style of the booklet was monotonous.	6%	34%	2%	43%	15%	3%	14%	28%	45%	10%
4. The booklet was too long.	7%	19%	2%	55%	17%	1%	4%	33%	55%	7%
5. The booklet stimulated my interest in educational financing, and I would like to read more on this topic.	4%	45%	0%	32%	19%	12%	49%	15%	15%	9%
6. The booklet spent too much time on the court cases.	4%	17%	4%	58%	17%	3%	2%	39%	47%	9%

Group IV

	First Testing					Second Testing				
	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	No Response
7. Some terms used in the booklet were not explained clearly enough.	2%	30%	0%	51%	17%	2%	5%	33%	61%	9%
8. The booklet takes for granted that the reader already knows a great deal about paying for schools.	11%	51%	0%	25%	13%	7%	12%	29%	44%	8%
9. After reading the booklet, I am more confused about educational financing than I was before.	4%	11%	4%	68%	13%	0%	0%	39%	51%	10%
10. The information in the booklet was too detailed to hold my attention.	11%	21%	2%	51%	15%	3%	7%	21%	61%	8%
11. Too many unimportant and unnecessary facts were included in the booklet.	2%	24%	2%	49%	23%	3%	11%	29%	48%	9%
12. The booklet was too opinionated to present a clear picture of the four alternatives.	0%	4%	9%	74%	13%	1%	1%	22%	67%	9%
13. The information in the booklet would have been more believable if it had been presented in the newspaper.	0%	2%	21%	60%	17%	0%	1%	34%	57%	8%

As the Tables demonstrate, we were quite successful in incorporating localized information and other "relevancy hooks" to bait reader interest; relatively successful in correcting mechanical problems, such as complexity of language, explanation of terminology, the elimination of secondary detail, and the use of a "story line"; and least successful with respect to the rennovation of the organizational structure, clarification of alternative plans, and the addition of more background information. While these results may be a commentary on our journalistic dexterity, it is more likely that they reflect variations in taste that transcend the racial and economic differences among the readers.

2. Consistency Among Geographical Sites

We thought it would be of more than passing interest to determine whether the secondary testing of the document would reveal differences attributable to geographical location. As suggested in the preceding section, our belief, based on the existing body of communications research, was that regional factors would be insignificant.

As matters turned out, our prophecy fulfilled itself: The differences we detected were minute, which is to say that low-income blacks in New York and Chicago tended to

have highly similar attitudes regarding our communications document. Correspondingly, there were few contradictions between the beliefs of the middle-income blacks in Chicago and New York, negligible variations among middle-income whites in Long Island and Arlington Heights, and virtually nothing to distinguish the responses of low-income blacks in New York and Chicago. Seemingly, then, racial background and economic level are of much greater influence than geographic location in determining people's communications preference.

Communication theorists have long held that group norms have a powerful influence on the way messages are received. People react to a message in accordance with the prevailing beliefs of the groups to which they belong. Thus, in our experiment, the conclusion that poverty and racial identity condition group norms more than place of residence was not unexpected.

In a corollary outcome, we indirectly validated two other communications canons. Most theorists accept the hypothesis that persons vest the communications medium they most use with the highest credibility: That is, television viewers regard television as a more honest source of information than newspapers; and newspaper readers believe that the press is somewhat more dependable

than television. In general, we found this to be true in our samplings, although an unexpectedly large proportion of our respondents pointed out that neither newspapers nor television could properly inform the public if the government allowed social agencies to operate in a cloak of secrecy. In this connection, there was, for all practical purposes, no difference among the Illinois and New York respondents.

The middle-income populations, generally somewhat better educated, tended to rely more on newspapers, and the lower income groups watched more television. Those of middle-income level were somewhat more optimistic about the reliability of the media, with whites having a greater degree of faith than blacks.

More than anything else, this facet of the investigation demonstrated, yet once again, not only that people will be people -- acting out their private beliefs and convictions -- but also that contemporary communications technology has reduced the nation from the vast territory it once was, to the equivalent of a neighborhood. One might hazard to guess that a poor black man in San Francisco, originally from Alabama, and a poor black man in New York, born in Seattle, would have little difficulty in dancing the same step.

3. Comparison of Dissemination Strategies

The second -- and in some ways the more interesting -- bonus we tried to extract from the study concerned a comparison of alternative dissemination strategies. To recapitulate, we studied a group of 200 people in the Chicago area and an additional group of 200 centered in and around New York City. Within this population of 400 people, there were 100 low-income black citizens; 100 middle-income blacks; 100 low-income whites; and 100 middle-income whites.

Working with our field agents, we divided each of these groups of 100 into five sub-groups, each containing approximately twenty readers. Then in lieu of merely distributing the targeted communications documents in a conventional manner, we used a different dissemination strategy with each of the five sub-groups. For purposes of comparison, we defined these five dissemination strategies as follows:

(a) Direct Delivery (mailing or handing the package to an individual, with an invitation to read)

(b) Leader Distribution (personal delivery by a status leader, with strong urging to read)

(c) Media Reinforcement (leader distribution, non-personal, coupled with radio and television messages)

(d) Multiple Short-Term Exposure (direct delivery in which the package was delivered three times, in three smaller sections, to achieve multiple exposure)

(e) Follow-up Task (leader distribution coupled with follow-up group discussions during which elements of this package were debated)

The Table below illustrates the reader distribution:

Reader Distribution

Group	Chicago	New York	Direct Delivery	Leader Distribution	Media Reinforcement	Multiple Exposure	Follow-up Task
Low-income black	50	50	20	20	20	20	20
Middle-income black	50	50	20	20	20	20	20
Low-income white	50	50	20	20	20	20	20
Middle-income white	50	50	20	20	20	20	20
Totals	200	200	80	80	80	80	80

As the Table indicates this procedure gave us about 80 readers -- spread across the four different groups -- for comparison of the five dissemination strategies. While the method was hardly distinguished by its sophistication, and while there are obvious limitations to the design, it did allow us to add what we considered a rather intriguing and important dimension to the study.

What we wanted to find out, of course, was whether these alternative dissemination strategies would affect reader attention and interest. The choice of the strategies was prompted by the theoretical underpinnings of contemporary communications lore. We knew, for example, that information alone rarely changes attitudes; rather, it is the way in which the information is presented that will more likely influence a person's response. Moreover, there is a widespread belief among students of communication that if a message is followed by a task in which the reader can participate, his interest is heightened and his resistance to the ideas is diminished. Thus, one of the strategies involved a reading of the document as a means of preparing for a subsequent community meeting. Similarly, it is known that people are highly responsive to the attitudes of status leaders in the groups to which they belong;

so we thought that using such a status leader to distribute the document and to urge that it be given close attention might substantially enhance reader attention and interest. The use of a multiple exposure device also was suggested by a well-known communications principle: Changes in attitude may be more apparent after an interval of time has elapsed than immediately following exposure to the message (Sleeper effect). Unfortunately, the use of a media reinforcement device was weakened by inopportune circumstances. We originally planned to complement the reading with parallel media exposure in newspapers, radio and television. However, because of the scheme through which we were forced to obtain our 400 readers, there was no satisfactory way of restricting such media messages to the particular 80 readers in any one of the sub-groups. Accordingly, we compromised by substituting pre-recorded, taped editorials and printed flyers. That is, the 80 readers in the media reinforcement sub-group were exposed to (1) a spoken statement by a prominent city official that was played at church meetings and PTA meetings, (2) copies of an editorial that had appeared in a city newspaper, and (3) printed "flyers" which discussed the problems of school finance. These secondary reinforcements took place while the reading was in process. Since only one of the

five sub-groups had such exposure, we were able to make at least crude judgments about the benefits of reinforcement activities.

In comparing the five strategies, we concluded that three factors were of primary significance: level of interest, amount of attention, and degree of credibility. To measure the level of interest, we recorded the number of readers in each of the five sub-groups who read the entire statement, assuming that the more interested readers would finish the assignment, whereas the less interested ones would not. To determine the amount of attention, we calculated the number of minutes each reader devoted to the reading. It seemed reasonable to assume that time devoted to reading constituted a defensible measure of attention, and thus could be used to contrast the effectiveness of the various strategies. Finally, to get at the degree of credibility, we asked each reader to indicate -- on a five point scale -- the extent to which he or she agreed with the ideas in the statement. We took the position that an effective dissemination strategy would not only create awareness but would also heighten the persuasiveness of the message; consequently, we assumed that there would be a strong connection between the potency of the dissemination method and the extent to which the readers "bought" the ideas.

The resulting comparisons are set forth below.

Comparison of Dissemination Strategies

Method of Distribution	Comparison of Reading: Yes	No	Average Minutes of Reading Time	Agreement with Ideas: Low Agreement 1 2 3 4 5 High Agreement Mean Ratings
Direct Delivery	54	26	18	3.2
Leader Distribution	70	10	54	4.1
Media Reinforcement	66	14	36	3.7
Multiple Exposure	61	19	25	3.3
Follow-up Task	74	6	78	4.7

The results make it clear, beyond any doubt, that direct delivery is the poorest of the dissemination strategies and leader distribution coupled with a follow-up task, is the most effective. Moreover, the figures dmonstrate a remarkable degree of consistency across the three criteria used. An unsolicited communications message (direct delivery) is least likely to receive a complete reading, receives the minimal amount of reader attention, and is, apparently, the least convincing. In contrast, a communications message that is disseminated by a person of high stature, and is accompanied by the reader's subsequent involvement (leader distribution coupled with follow-up task) will most likely be read, will consume a larger amount of the readers' attention, and will -- in all probably -- be the most persuasive.

Between these two extremes of the best and the worst, the other three strategies also follow a consistent pattern. A listing of the five compared strategies, ranked in the order of their effectiveness, would read as follows:

1. Leader distribution coupled with follow-up task
2. Leader distribution
3. Media reinforcement
4. Multiple exposure
5. Direct delivery

Interpreted in the light of the theoretical notions discussed throughout the report, the results are no wonderment. Indeed, a reasonably intuitive person might have predicted their outcome. Nonetheless, it is always comforting to have an intuition verified -- and even more rewarding to have a firm basis for drawing secondary implications.

The direct delivery of a communications message (the method most commonly practiced within education) seemingly, has only limited potency. Because of the selective exposure factor, such messages are relatively easy to ignore. As a general rule, they will only appeal to people who have some knowledge about the subject and who already have cultivated a considerable amount of interest in its content. Paradoxically, then, those who have the greatest need for the information are least likely to heed it, preferring to devote their attention to other subjects that already command their interest and about which they are already somewhat informed. One might argue, therefore, that a direct delivery procedure has its place in educational communications -- but the place should be reserved for messages aimed at people whose interest is guaranteed by previous exposure.

Our results were somewhat better with the multiple exposure procedure. Instead of delivering the entire document at once, we divided it into three sections and made delivery in installments. Our hypothesis was that the repetitive delivery would increase reader involvement. While the attention, interest, and credibility factors went up slightly, the readers' reactions were still relatively disappointing. Some readers were undoubtedly lured into a deeper sense of obligation, but many found it as easy to put aside three communications as one. And, in a few instances, the repeated contact served only to generate a bit of irritation.

In the media reinforcement -- the procedure wherein we were forced to modify our original intention -- even better results were obtained. Unfortunatley, we cannot predict what the outcome would have been had we been able to invoke concomitant communications on radio and television. However, since the power of these media almost certainly would have exceeded that of the reinforcement devices which were substituted, it seems safe to say that, in all likelihood, the effectiveness of the strategy would have increased markedly.

We concluded, from our interpretation of the events, that the immediate availability of the document, enhanced

by other reminders from entirely different sources, worked to "whet the appetite" about the topic. Accessibility, in other words, combined with seemingly accidental exposure, tends to increase reader response. This, of course, is essentially what occurs when attention from different media causes a topic or issue to achieve extraordinary prominence. The energy crisis issue, for example, fueled by repeated communications in the newspapers, radio, and television, attains enormous currency. As a result, it becomes relatively difficult for a social-minded person to avoid exposure. The strategy's potential comes as no surprise; the more important fact, probably, is that the education profession has not used it as efficiently as it might.

The strategy of reader distribution -- second in overall potency -- derived its power from an obvious stimulus. When a recognized opinion leader personally urges an individual to read a communication and to respect its arguments, a vigorous supporting force is released. Not only is interpersonal contact an extremely important element in transmitting news and information, but strong urging on the part of someone who either has great credibility or commands admiration, also strengthens the communication process. There is, nonetheless, a severe limitation to the strategy.

Our aim was to communicate objective, unbiased information to various groups of citizens. We found, however, that in virtually every instance, the status leader, while urging an individual to read the document, also supported a particular point of view. In short, there seems to be no way of utilizing a status leader as a communication agent without, at the same time, putting up with the propaganda he is inclined to perpetuate.

The most successful dissemination strategy, in our test, involved leader distribution in conjunction with a follow-up task. In designing the procedure, we asked status leaders to distribute the document and urge its reading (a replication of the procedure described in the above paragraph). Then we asked them to chair community, town-hall type meetings in which the readers would participate. Each individual knew in advance that the reading was in preparation for a forthcoming community meeting. The method derived its momentum, obviously, from the accumulative force of three separate incentives; personal involvement, collaboration with an opinion leader, and active use of acquired knowledge. Thus, personal ego -- in the form of a desire to make a respectable contribution to the community meeting -- added its weight to the other stimulii. The primary limitation, from the standpoint of educational

dissemination, stemmed from two problems: For one, the strategy is cumbersome, involving a considerable amount of additional effort; and for another, it depends upon the individual's willingness to participate in the consequent task; a commitment, which by no means, can be assured in advance.

More than anything else, the comparison of dissemination strategies demonstrated that there is more than one way to send a message to the educational public, that among these alternatives some methods are clearly better than others, and that greater effort invariably brings greater benefits.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Many people have incorporated in their values what is perhaps an impossible ideal regarding the fruition of education: The truth shall set the mind free. The attainment of this nonpareil is handicapped by two of communication's most difficult conundrums: One, is the withholding of information by social agencies ever justified? And two, should the media adapt themselves to the desires of their audiences, or instead, should audiences be encouraged to accept that which they receive, thus leaving the media free to determine which courses best serve the public welfare?

To cite a current example, large numbers of schools have begun to embrace the movement known as open education. At the moment, the early results of the movement appear disappointing. Although a humane school and low academic achievement need not go hand in hand, children in open schools -- though somewhat less unhappy and considerably less constrained -- seem, on the whole, to have a diminished mastery of fundamentals. To publicize this fact widely would be -- as the inevitable consequence of public indignation -- to close the open schools.

It is quite possible, however, that in time the open schools will overcome their present infirmities and develop a brand of education superior to any now available. Thus, premature judgment could lead to unwarranted abortion, possibly depriving future children of a better quality education. How much, then, should the public be told and how much should be held in waiting?

Walter Lippmann pondered precisely this problem, many years ago, when he debated the dichotomy between the citizen's right to know and his capacity to participate in decisions regarding public policy. Lippmann recognized that while communication was obliged to keep the people attuned to what was going on, the government also had need, upon occasion, to maintain secrecy. Making it clear that information and truth were not the same, Lippmann wrote: "The function of news is to signalize an event. The function of truth is to bring to light the hidden facts, to set them into relation with each other, and to make a picture of reality on which men can act." Should this be so, it at once becomes obvious that the media -- in pursuing their own purposes -- cannot be consistently trusted to communicate educational reality. Other forces, perhaps, like the present booklets, must be broughtinto play.

As for the second of the two conundrums, an equally vexing problem exists. The public tends to prefer information that confirms its existing beliefs, and to reject that which does not. But if people are not exposed to contradictory ideas, their beliefs can only grow more rigid until eventually they harden with age and grow moribund. The media, who invariably measure success and potency by the yardstick of audience approval, are most inclined to please their patrons -- and for good reason. For example, we are moved to cancel our subscriptions when a favorite newspaper or magazine takes what we consider to be an unacceptable position on an issue.

The key to the quandary obviously lies in our willful desires, our intellectural cowardice, and our confused moods. The real villain in the drama is not the communication media -- who prize controversy -- but the solidified, or at least partially unrelenting opinions of the average citizen.

All of which is to say that merely exposing the public to the opposite sides of an educational issue cannot presuppose a change of convictions. Further, only in its editorializing has the fourth estate a legitimate right to premeditate its influence on public opinion. Once the various ramifications of an issue have been set forth

with total objectivity (if such a thing is possible), people should be free to filter the implications through the screen of their own values and beliefs. The odds are therefore good that they will reach highly individual conclusions.

The perpetuation of social progress through an informed citizenry can come about only as people modify their beliefs about the directions in which the society ought to go. These beliefs are notimmutable, although they sometimes change with excruciating slowness; and the free flow of information -- bolstered by social necessity -- can remold human values. Divorce and abortion, for example, once socially intolerable, no longer carry the same stigma they once did.

Hence, the dissemination of factual information on issues, as a means of educating the public about education, can gradually cause people to change first their attitudes, then their beliefs, and eventually their values. In this way, new forms of education come to take on acceptability and greater popular appeal.

If, on the other hand, we persist in perfecting innovations, without bothering to facilitate a corresponding change in public expectation, new approaches to schooling will surely be met with suspicion, hostility, or even with outright rejection.

The ultimate purpose of experiments such as the one described here, is to enhance the ability of educational institutions to communicate with their constituencies. The present study, however, is no more than one small piece to be fitted into a much larger puzzle. Similar experiments are needed in radio and television, in person-to-person exchange, and in the various forms of two-way interaction between senders and receivers of messages. Not only is it safe to say that the surface has barely been scratched, but one might also add that the scratches, as yet, are hardly perceptible.

The times change, and as they do, the locus of public concern shifts from crisis to crisis. In earlier decades, people were content to view education as a service institution, isolated from political wars and free from power disputes among the classes. But today, education is a major arena of social conflict, serving as a battleground for contests of social mobility, ethnic identity, and racial equality. Struggles over who shall control, what shall be taught, how much shall be spent, and where learning shall occur, are commonplace. As a result, public concern increases almost daily, and the imperative for communicating information mounts accordingly.

There is, consequently, a great need for a new

conception of school-community relations. On the local front, schools must -- as they always have -- endeavor to acquaint parents and other interested citizens with emerging developments and with the changing complexion of the educational process. And, on the national front, issues on the schooling of the young must be given larger exposure so that the public -- which already has begun to grasp the true importance of the nation's education systems -- becomes more clear about what is what.

The question of how best to educate the public about education is, of course, the essence of the problem. While we may have much to learn regarding the effective dissemination of information about schooling, we have certainly come a long way from the point of total ignorance. In part, the task is one of discriminating between the kind of communications most appropriate for professionals, and that most appropriate for the public.

In the case of the profession itself, the overiding objective is to make research and development accessible and more productive. Thus, dissemination must go beyond the mere distribution of information and seek the larger goal of planned change. In the case of the general public, however, the objective is to make people aware of education's continually changing aims, spawned by the needs of a

shifting society, and to familiarize the public with the nature of available innovations. For only through such familiarity, can there be any hope of reducing people's antagonism to any school differing from that which they themselves experienced. In a sense, then, a public too must be kept informed as a prerequisite to the ultimate quest -- that of facilitating the improvement of education. An informed public is the indispensable condition for increasing the community's support and decreasing its resistance.

If one accepts the desirability of a public that is knowledgable about its educational institutions, it is reasonable to argue that there exists a problem which hungers for solution. The sophistication of most taxpayers, even parents, regarding their communities' schools leaves a good deal to be desired. It is equally reasonable to argue, moreover, that such ignorance is hardly their own failure; if one can judge by the growing attention educational issues have received in the popular journals, public appetite has suffered from gross undernourishment.

Clearly, there is work to be done. The present study, in a very modest way, demonstrated that people are relatively responsive to communication efforts on the part of the education profession and that their preference

for particular communication styles that has been honed through habit. There are, however, other important questions which require answers.

What, for example, are the comparative impacts of locally and nationally sponsored information programs? What criteria can be used to determine the educational issues of greatest significance? If, as this study seemed to indicate, multi-media exposure offers substantial advantages, how can the giant networks of commercial media -- radio, press, and television -- be harnessed to the cause? And, how can the two conundrums, referred to earlier, best be resolved? Perhaps the best use of the work herein reported, apart from any potential distribution of the products, would be to regard the exercise as a study to a study. Far more than anything else, the research would seem to have made plain the vase amount of unfinished business that remains.

IV. PRODUCTS

In the large, the project produced seven specific products:

1. A basic synthesis of the research on school finance.
2. A targeted communication aimed at low-income black citizens.
3. A targeted communication aimed at low-income white citizens.
4. A targeted communication aimed at middle-income black citizens.
5. A targeted communication aimed at middle-income white citizens.
6. A report summarizing the research reviewed and the experimental procedures employed.
7. An auxillary report in the form of a "primer" on dissemination strategies.

The last of these items deserves a special note of explanation. It occurred to us, in pursuing the study, that we might be able to extract a compendium of operational principles on dissemination that would be of general use to workers in the field. Accorindgly, we have, of our own volition, prepared such a statement. Although the work

on the compendium had the specific approval of our Office of Education Program Officer, it should be understood that no additional funds were requested or received for this extra product, an addendum going beyond the grant obligations.

V. AFTERWORD

With the conclusion of this project, the present organization of the Communications Coalition for Educational Change comes to an end. In the future, the Coalition's original sponsors -- The Kettering Foundation, The U.S. Office of Education, The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and Curriculum Development Associates -- will, each in their own way, make use of the Coalition's recorded accomplishments and strive to perpetuate its goals in conjunction with their other endeavors. The Coalition's offices will be removed from the National Education Association's facility and will, at the discretion of its Board, locate elsewhere. Its Board of Directors has indicated that it plans to "launch a new phase in the organization's activities." The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, under the Executive Directorship of James W. Becker will also pursue some of the Coalition's aspirations under its own banner.

Louis J. Rubin, the Coalition's first Executive Director, will become Professor of Education at the University of Illinois, Urbana. His future work in the area of dissemination and public education will be carried on in conjunction with the university's College of Communications.

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